**Do You Feel the Hunger?**

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# Do You Feel the Hunger?

by justheretoreadhannibalfics

Summary

Hannibal has been a consultant for the FBI for a few years, and he has grown rather fond of working on both sides of the scenes. He finds something even more interesting when he and the team are summoned to Louisiana for a peculiar set of killings.

# Legends

Hannibal frowned up at the sun. It was far too hot and humid for his usual attire, and he wasn't pleased about it.

He walked into the air conditioned building and was met by Jack before he had made it ten steps into the police station.

"Local police have been doing pretty well with the evidence for once," Jack said, waving for Hannibal to follow him, "And luckily I know the lead detective, so we shouldn't have too much resistance."

Hannibal hadn't been very agreeable when the FBI first asked him to be a consultant on their more odd cases, but he had grown to rather enjoy it. That didn't make him any happier to be in Louisiana in the summer.

They walked into a room that had the typical appearance. A certain feel that was replicated by television for the masses. There was a large cork board covered in maps and pictures on one end. There was a mostly empty table in the center with uncomfortable metal chairs marking places where people were to sit.

Hannibal took note of the others in the room as he set his briefcase on the table.

Zeller and Price were sitting on the side opposite the door, heads ducked together in quiet conversation. There was a man in a police uniform standing in front of the cork board, his back to Hannibal and a hand on his hip just above his holster.

"Will," Jack said.

The man turned only about halfway to glance at Hannibal, who nodded in greeting. He was wearing glasses, but they didn't seem to belong on his face correctly.

"This is Doctor Hannibal Lecter, our psychiatric consultant," Jack finished, earning only a nod from the man before he turned away again.

Jack seemed to have expected that kind of response, turning to Hannibal with an exasperated expression.

"That's Detective Will Graham. He used to work with the FBI a bit, so he's familiar with the way we work. He was also the one who called us in, and I'm glad he did. This is definitely our scene," Jack explained to Hannibal.

Hannibal nodded and took off his suit jacket, draping it over the back of a chair and sitting at the table. He hated having to be under dressed like that, but he knew he would draw more gazes in a full suit than his dress shirt and vest. It was too hot for either.

Jack sat near the head of the table, apparently leaving the head seat empty so the board could be more visible.

“Will, could you fill the rest of us in with what you found?” Jack asked.

Will turned around now, staring at the table, rather than looking at any of the people sitting at it. His eyes were vibrant blue and a stray curl of his dark hair fell over his brow. He seemed to have a permanently disappointed frown on his face as he began to speak.

“This isn’t going to be pretty, so if you have a weak stomach, probably quit your job,” he said with little humor as he passed them each a file.

“The victims have each been nearly torn to shreds,” he continued, “but whatever did it was much bigger than any wolf or animal that lives around here. We’re thinking it likely wasn’t an animal, because of the way the bodies were discovered. Each one had a bite of their own heart in their mouth, most likely put there by the killer, and they were alive for most of the process.”

Price made a disgusted sound when he opened the folder to discover photos of exactly what Will had described.

“Did you find the rest of the hearts, or just the bit in their mouths?” he asked.

Will nodded as if he had expected that question.

“Shoved back into their chests,” he said, gesturing at the files.

Hannibal leafed through the pictures himself and found them sufficiently unorderly. This killer had little elegance. The chests had been torn open, and the ribs pried apart to give access to the heart. Most of the organs were missing, but the heart had indeed been shoved back into place seemingly in a hurry.

“I assume there has been no trace or DNA evidence found thus far,” Hannibal said, looking up at Will.

The other man glanced up and locked eyes with him for a second before snapping his gaze back to the table.

“Nothing we could make useful, yet,” he replied, “Which is why I called you in. I don’t have the resources to deal with this, and I know from experience that you do.”

Jack nodded.

“So, we need to get Beverly in the same room as any evidence they have, and get you two in the same room as the bodies,” Jack said, pointing at Zeller and Price, “And Hannibal, I want you to stay with Will for as long as it takes you to make a profile of this Psycho.”

Hannibal nodded, looking over Will. He wasn’t overly fond of the idea of having to spend more time with him, but he agreed that it would be the best way to get a profile quickly.

Will didn't seem anxious to get started either, but Jack dismissed each of them to their specific duties, leaving Will and Hannibal alone in the meeting room.

Hannibal stood and offered his hand to Will.

Will stared at it for a moment as if it was the most absurd thing he had ever seen, before reluctantly taking it.

"Hannibal Lecter," Hannibal said, "Though I know Jack introduced me briefly. I think it much more suitable that I make first impressions on my own terms."

Will nodded, taking his hand back and dropping it onto the file he had on the table.

"Will Graham," he replied, "and Jack must really like you. He didn't tell you what to do the way he does with everyone else."

Hannibal tilted his head curiously and plucked his jacket off the chair to hang it over his arm.

"Truly," he said, "I don't know if that is on account of him liking me, or simply having a healthy amount of respect for me."

Will shrugged as he picked the folder up.

"For Jack, that's the same thing. He isn't a very agreeable man unless he knows he needs to be. You're probably someone he doesn't want to have to replace."

After he said this, Will winced and glanced back up at Hannibal.

"Sorry. I'm not very agreeable either," he gave as an apology.

Hannibal smiled lightly. Perhaps this would be more entertaining than he had expected.

"No need to apologize. I found that very astute of you. I think you will be an invaluable part of our team if that is anything to go by. I'm sure you already have a profile waiting," Hannibal said, walking to open the door for the both of them.

Will gave him a surprised, but wary look.

"I might," he said slowly, "but most people don't want me on their "Team". I don't even think that's what Jack had in mind."

Hannibal shrugged slightly, waving Will through the open door ahead of him.

"I expect he thought you would want to be more helpful than this initial briefing," Hannibal replied, "Though I would enjoy the continuation of your company for the investigation. I think you could provide valuable insights."

Will looked him over as they walked down the hall, and seemed to come to some sort of conclusion.

“So, I think your profile would benefit from a first hand look at the bodies. You don’t strike me as squeamish,” Will said, waving down the hall to indicate their destination.

Hannibal nodded.

“I have had much experience with the more gruesome side of things,” he said, “Anything I should have in mind when I see them?”

Will was making more eye contact by margins whenever he looked at Hannibal, and he gave him an inquisitive look just then.

“I think you should look, and then we should compare notes,” he said.

Hannibal nodded again.

“I thought as much, but I was curious. I am similarly curious as to what your relationship with Jack is. He seems to give you respect, though he has never spoken of you before. Might I ask?” Hannibal wondered aloud.

He wasn’t sure if he would be seen as rude for asking, but he was genuinely intrigued. Jack had hidden Will in his sleeve and never once mentioned him, and yet here he was, a perfect resource waiting to be utilized.

Will grimaced.

“No, you mightn’t,” he said, his southern drawl making itself more known, “I don’t discuss the FBI with people I just met. You’re not gonna be an exception.”

Hannibal raised a hand in surrender. It was obviously a sensitive topic, and he really didn’t want to seem intrusive.

They reached a large, blank door at the end of a hall and Will tipped his head to it, turning to face Hannibal.

“This is where the bodies are. You’re really gonna want to take some good looks at everything we’ve got before you write anything up for Jack. It’s a strange one, this.”

With that, Will pushed the door open and Hannibal followed him in.

The faces of Price and Zeller popped up to greet them, and they each smiled hesitantly at Will when they saw him.

“Hello, Will,” Price said carefully, “It’s been a while.”

Will grunted in greeting, keeping his eyes on the body on the table.

“Not long enough,” he said.

Zeller quietly turned his eyes back to the body himself, for once not seeming to want to antagonize.

The body truly was in pieces.

The abdomen was in worse shape than the chest, and nearly every organ was missing, aside from some shredded remains. Hannibal leaned in close, trying not to wrinkle his nose at the smell of chilled rot. The tears seemed to have been made by massive claws, and a few cuts looked like teeth marks, but they didn't match anything he could think of in that moment.

There was an underlying scent of something animal, but it was strange, and Hannibal again couldn't place it.

The face of the victim was frozen in disgusted terror, their mouth slightly agape from having the piece of their own heart removed.

Will stood and watched as Hannibal looked over the body. His eyes never left Hannibal, and Hannibal wanted to grin at him, showing off his teeth, but he didn't.

Hannibal finally straightened. Zeller and Price looked at him expectantly.

"These incisions," Hannibal said, gesturing, "Look as if they were made by claws, and there are some on the ribs that could have been made from teeth. You should look into it and see if you can find a match."

The two nodded at him and scrambled around for tools and supplies. Hannibal had never seen them work so quietly, and he cast another glance at Will. Will stood straight, staring at the body with a scowl.

Something about this man made them either afraid, or guilty. Hannibal was anxious to find out what.

Will pivoted on his heel and left through the door, leaving Hannibal to follow. Hannibal was entirely intrigued now.

Through the next door, Hannibal saw Beverly, in her entire protective getup, going over some clothes and other items.

She looked up after a moment and smiled.

"Will! It's been too long. How've you been?" She asked happily.

Will offered a weak smile, and it was the first smile Hannibal had seen him give.

"Hey, Bev. Yeah, I honestly wasn't hoping to have to see you guys again. You, at least not under these circumstances," he said, waving at the evidence on the tables.

Beverly nodded and quickly stepped away from the table.

"How's everything going?" she asked, a touch of friendly concern in her voice, "I know Jack won't be too soft on you. Are you doing okay though?"

Will shrugged, again trying to give her a smile, though it was far from convincing.

“My head’s clear, I just want this to get over with so Jack will leave me alone again.”

Beverly nodded again and gestured at the tables.

“I haven’t found anything noteworthy yet, but I’ve only been at it a few hours. I’m sure I’ll find something, but all I’ve got now is some dirt and grass probably from where the body was found. That doesn’t tell us much.”

Will nodded and leaned in close to look at the bits of debris.

“If you find anything, let me know?” he asked.

Beverly agreed and turned to Hannibal.

“Hey, you. Don’t be too hard on this guy, you hear? You’ll have me to answer to if you give him a rough time. Don’t just be polite, try to be nice.”

Hannibal raised his eyebrows. He had never seen Beverly act that protective of anyone before in their time working together.

“I wouldn’t dream of upsetting him in any way,” Hannibal agreed, “In fact, I think we will work quite well together.”

Beverly flicked her eyes between the two of them. She didn’t seem all that convinced, but she wasn’t overly concerned either.

Will bid Beverly goodbye and they walked together back to the briefing room. Will stared at the board that showed all they knew of the killer, and Hannibal leafed through his file again.

“This killer likely uses some sort of animal to aid him in his attacks,” Hannibal noted, “If the marks on the bodies are any indication. But what kind of animal still has yet to be determined.”

Will shook his head. His eyes were distant and wandering.

“This won’t make a lot of sense, but he’s not using an animal,” he said.

Hannibal waited for an explanation, his head tipped in curiosity.

Will turned to him with sharp and focused eyes.

“This is too personal,” he said, “he’s feeding them their own hearts, and then shoving the heart back into their chest. An animal wouldn’t distinguish between the organs. They especially wouldn’t be able to leave the heart entirely undamaged when they dig out the lungs. That’s a bit odd, don’t you think? An animal eating the lungs.”

Hannibal considered this.

“Then what is your theory?” He asked.

Will sucked in a breath, turning back to the board as if it would reveal something.

“Lycanthropy,” he stated.

Hannibal furrowed his brow.

“The belief that one is a werewolf?” He asked.

Will rubbed a hand over his face, betraying how tired he was for a second before returning to his natural frown.

“Yeah. I think this is someone who thinks they are a werewolf, and they are going around at night, killing people. I don’t know what the heart thing is all about, but everything else fits. The teeth and the claws won’t match anything on file, because they aren’t from an animal. They will be something the person made, or bought, that he uses. The heart ritual might be indicative of something he believes about werewolves, or it might be his way of telling us he feels like he is consuming himself. I don’t quite know yet.”

Hannibal smiled. That was all entirely clever of Will, and it gave him some insight.

“You have pure empathy,” he stated bluntly.

Will started and turned to him.

“What?” he asked.

Hannibal nodded.

“You can put yourself into the mindset of anyone you choose. You can see what they did and think like them, see the reasoning behind it, and predict what they will do. This explains why Jack would be so eager to have you help him. I imagine it is a tiring thing to be capable of.”

Will grimaced at him and seemed to retreat within himself.

“I almost forgot I was talking to a psychiatrist. Are you going to go back to Baltimore and tell all your psychiatrist friends that you’re the new authority on the thinking of Will Graham? They would eat that right up, I’m sure.”

He was angry, and Hannibal realized he may have acted rashly.

“I did not mean any harm by my observation. I merely wanted to understand how you managed to have such clear insights. I know now. It is a unique gift, as well as a terrifying one. It must be hard for you to draw divides between the good and the bad in your mind.”

Will was still upset, but he took a few breaths to calm himself.

“There’s been a lot of talk about the way I think,” he said, a dangerous undertone in his voice, “And I don’t appreciate being psychoanalyzed. Please keep your observations for the murderer. We need to focus on catching him.”

Hannibal nodded in apology.

“Is there anything else you can see in this killer’s eyes?” he asked.

Will sighed and turned back to look at the pictures. He likely had them all committed to memory by now, but they gave him an anchor to reality.

“Some of the less suspicious locals have dubbed him the Rugaru,” Will stated, almost humorously.

Hannibal looked through the pictures again, looking for anything that might have been missed.

“And the more suspicious locals?” he asked casually.

Hannibal could feel Will’s eyes turn back to him with cold calculation before he answered.

“They are afraid that’s true,” he said, “The Rugaru isn’t a joke to them. The fact that we haven’t caught him yet gives them justification for worrying that he might actually be the cryptid.”

Hannibal looked up and caught Will’s eyes for a fleeting moment before Will turned away again.

“And what do you believe?” Hannibal asked.

Will rolled his shoulders, letting out an amused huff.

“I’m not suspicious,” he declared, “I know he’s a man, and we’re going to get him.”

Hannibal nodded.

“Please, tell me more about this Rugaru. I don’t believe I am overly familiar with the tale.”

Will sat down at the table and opened his own file, spreading the pictures out in an order that only made sense to him. He then sorted the pages of notes in a similar manner.

“Basically a werewolf, for us in Louisiana,” he said, “Came over from France, hence the name. It used to be called the Loup-garou, and it still is by some, but the more common name nowadays is Rugaru. There are a lot of conflicting stories about it.”

Hannibal hummed, signaling Will to continue.

“Some say you turn into one if you don’t obey the rules of Lent for seven years. Some say you become one if you are cut or injured by one. Some say you can avoid becoming one after an injury if you keep it a secret for a year and a day. Some say that if you make the beast bleed, then it turns back human, but the curse transfers to you. There are so many variations, I could go on for hours. It doesn’t really matter. We’re dealing with a human.”

Hannibal nodded.

“I agree, but a human that likely believes himself to be more. You claim lycanthropy, and I think you are correct. So we must keep it in mind when creating a profile.”

Will didn’t betray his thoughts at that, studying Hannibal with cold curiosity.

“You’re right. Something they might not have mentioned yet, the killings started on the night of a full moon. That’s part of the reason I’m leaning toward lycanthropy. It all just fits.”

Hannibal hummed in agreement. It certainly did fit the pattern.

“But the killer is not waiting for only nights with a full moon,” Hannibal observed, reading through a few notes, “They have continued despite the lunar cycle.”

Will shrugged.

“This happens to serial killers,” he said, “they kill, and then they’re addicted. He probably doesn’t even know it’s not a full moon anymore. He’s so deep into his delusions of being a werewolf that it doesn’t matter. He just feels the need to kill again, so he does.”

That was more than likely. Many passionate killers would feel the adrenaline and serotonin rush from a kill, and they would chase it ever after.

Luckily for Hannibal, he had other reasons for killing.

# Lesions

The morning air was only a slightly more agreeable temperature, and Hannibal found himself once again without his jacket. He rolled up his sleeves as well as he was escorted onto the crime scene.

He was slightly disappointed that his escort was not Will Graham, but he was entirely pleased to find that it was because Will was already on the scene.

Will stood over the body, wearing his police cap, which Hannibal hadn't even known he had. The cap provided shade for his eyes and pressed the curls of his hair down around his ears. He stood straight, a hand above his holster again, as appeared to be his habit. He was a stark figure of heroic justice.

Will didn't turn or show any sign of registering Hannibal's presence when he walked up to stand beside him. He simply stared at the body with disdain.

"Same thing as all the others," Will said, "no evidence of any use. I don't think this guy even has a predictable way of choosing his victims. I think it's just chance. Someone he meets on the street at night."

Hannibal nodded, looking over the scene. Something caught his eye and he leaned toward it.

"That's a print," Will said before he could get a good look, "Closest thing it could be is a bear, though there aren't any in this area. It's probably something else the guy bought or made. It won't be helpful in the end."

Hannibal hummed. He had gathered as much as Will spoke. The print was almost absurdly large, eliminating anything local from the possible culprits.

Will snagged some tweezers from a passing forensics guy and squatted over the body. Hannibal peered over his shoulder as he placed a gloved thumb on the victim's chin and pulled the mouth slightly open. He reached in with the tweezers and pulled out a piece of muscle.

"The piece of her heart," Will commented, slipping it into an evidence bag, "So everything really is the same. This guy gets the job done, and quickly by the looks of it."

Hannibal had to agree. This had all the appearances of a quick and lethal attack. The victims probably didn't even have time to register that they were being attacked before they were dead, or close.

This one was fresh, not even smelling like decay yet. It had been done only hours before, and there had been no witnesses. At least none that had come forward.

"Who discovered the body?" Hannibal asked.

Will's head snapped up and swiveled until his gaze landed on an ambulance with a man sitting in the back.

Hannibal looked over to where he waved, and studied the man.

He looked pale and feeble, though he was well muscled. He was not wearing a shirt, but he wore a pair of cargo shorts and some sandals. His eyes were sharp and his gaze was flicking everywhere as if he were in a panic. He had blood on his hands, likely from trying to help the corpse he had found so early in the morning. It must have still been dark when he stumbled across it.

An officer handed Will a clipboard and Will thanked him as he looked over it.

"Randall Tier," he read aloud, "Was taking a walk this morning all on his lonesome, all but tripped over the body. He says he didn't realize she was dead until he was up to his elbows in blood."

Will glanced over at him with a blank look.

"He works at a natural history museum only a few blocks down the road."

Hannibal considered this. Will did not seem convinced by the story, but Hannibal wondered why.

"You are questioning his innocence," Hannibal noted.

Will looked at him with a look of confused concern. He wasn't wearing his glasses this morning, and his eyes were all the more vibrant for it.

"Something doesn't fit," Will admitted, glancing back down at the papers, "He doesn't live this direction, and there isn't really any reason for him to have walked this way, especially in the dark. I really can't say that makes him guilty, but it does raise my suspicions."

Will glanced up for a second before his usual frown slid into place. Hannibal heard Jack barking orders behind him, and knew the cavalry had arrived.

"Hannibal, glad you're here. Have anything to say about all this?" Jack demanded, the team passing by his flanks in silence.

Hannibal nodded.

"Will and I believe we are dealing with someone who suffers from lycanthropy. They believe they are some form of werewolf. You'll notice the killings began on a full moon, and all the evidence we have managed to collect seems to point toward some sort of man-made animal contraptions."

Jack frowned. He didn't like what he was hearing.

"Will, are you sticking with us, then?" Jack asked.

Hannibal turned to watch Will as he replied.

Will raised his eyes to meet Jack's, his gaze flicking to Hannibal a few times as he did. He licked his lips nervously before he nodded.

"I'm sticking with you, Jack," he said, "at least until we catch this one. For my own peace of mind."

Jack was very pleased with that.

"Great. You and Hannibal are a team until I say otherwise. You profile together, you drive together, whatever you do, you do together, until something changes."

Hannibal thought that was a bit extreme of him, but he nodded despite his feelings. Will seemed likewise disenchanted, but nodded as well.

Jack walked past them to shoo some of the local cops away from the body, and Will let out a heavy sigh.

Hannibal studied him with curiosity.

Will noticed him looking and offered a smile. It was the first smile Will had directed at him, and it was more genuine than those he had given Beverly. It was breathtaking.

"Sorry, Jack isn't a fan of local police. They tend to try to mess with his investigations. He's not going to give my guys any slack just because they're with me. I actually think he's going to be harder on them, expecting me to keep them in line for him."

He looked tired, and rubbed a hand over his face.

"You wanna grab coffee or something?" He asked Hannibal, "Since we have to stick together like scales on a gator, I guess you don't have much choice. Follow me."

Will led Hannibal to one of the patrol cars and gestured for him to get in.

"I hope you don't mind, but I prefer to be the driver when I'm in familiar places," Will offered when they were both seated, "and I don't think you would be able to find the place I'm headed."

Hannibal nodded and watched out the window as they drove. Will wasn't overly anxious to initiate conversation, and Hannibal was happy to let the drive pass in silence. He wanted Will to feel comfortable with him.

They pulled up to a very, very small shop that almost looked abandoned, had it not been for the neon signs in the windows and around the door.

At Hannibal's expression, Will chuckled.

"It's probably nothing like what you're used to," he admitted, "But it's the best place around to get coffee. Come on."

There was quiet music playing in the background when Hannibal followed Will into the shop. It was reminiscent of something southern, but with notes of something very european as well.

“Detective Graham,” Said a friendly voice from behind the counter, “One of our only regulars. The usual for you?”

Will walked up to the counter and nodded.

“Thanks. Frank. I’ll pay for my friend here as well.”

Will waved at Hannibal and Frank’s eyes scanned him curiously.

“Let me guess,” Frank said, leaning back to look at Hannibal better, “European, high class, you a doctor of some sort?”

Hannibal smiled dryly.

“Yes,” he said.

Will laughed softly.

“This is Doctor Lecter. He’s a psychiatrist. I’m working with him temporarily.”

Frank nodded.

“I think I know just what you’ll like,” he said, turning to go make their drinks, “If you don’t, then you can give it back and special order for no additional charge.”

Hannibal frowned, but Will shrugged at him.

“It’s part of his local charm,” he explained, “He likes to guess what people like. He’s pretty good too. Just humor him.”

Hannibal kept his skeptical frown, but made no objection.

When Frank presented their drinks, Will thanked him and gave him a large tip with a smile.

Will led Hannibal again, to a table by the back corner of the cafe. He sat with his back to the wall, giving himself a perfect vantage point to observe the entire cafe as well as the door.

When Hannibal was passed his cup, he inhaled the scent.

There were some spices, though it smelled smooth and dark. Hannibal considered it for a moment before he took a sip.

Will watched him as he sipped his own cup.

“Good?” He asked.

Hannibal tipped his head in a sort of shrug.

“It’s acceptable. It is not how I would have made it for myself, but it is not disagreeable.”

Will laughed, taking off his cap. His curls fell down around his face and framed his smile brilliantly.

“Frank! You pleased the good doctor,” Will called, “congrats. He’s a tough one, and he says it’s acceptable.”

There was a distant woot from the back of the shop, and Will continued to chuckle.

Hannibal watched Will intently.

There was something about him that was intrinsically endearing, and from what Hannibal had seen, he usually hid it behind a bad mood. He seemed younger when he smiled like this, and it was making Hannibal feel attached, despite his best efforts.

Will looked up at Hannibal and raised an eyebrow.

“Something on your mind, Doctor Lecter?” he asked, taking another swig of his coffee.

“You called me “a tough one”,” he said, “I wonder why you would think that.”

Will shrugged, the tension in his shoulders slowly dissipating.

“I can tell,” he said bluntly, “you are a man of specific tastes. If you don’t want to give that impression, maybe drop the tailored suits and overly formal posture.”

Hannibal nodded. That made sense.

“So,” Will said, “European. Any specific area in Europe?”

Hannibal wet his lip with a small smile.

“I do believe we should enter some sort of agreement about asking personal questions,” Hannibal mused aloud, “some sort of quid pro quo, if I may.”

Will grimaced.

“Fine, but there will be some things I don’t want to tell you,” he said.

“I as well,” Hannibal said, “Lithuania. I traveled a bit in my youth, but I am natively from Lithuania.”

Will nodded.

“So, a question for me, then?” He asked.

Hannibal thought for a moment.

“You seem to have had some unfortunate experiences with psychiatrists in the past. May I ask what those were?”

Will studied him suspiciously before shrugging.

“I suppose it won’t do any harm, as long as you don’t try to sell anyone information on me,” he said, “Are you familiar with Fredrick Chilton?”

Hannibal winced at the name.

“Unfortunately,” he agreed.

Will smiled venomously.

“Yeah. He heard about me through some sort of grapevine, and did everything he could to get at my head. His ambitions know no bounds, and he enlisted the help of an equally distasteful journalist to try to get some dirt on me. It didn’t end well.”

Will shifted his weight, leaning on one arm and he flinched.

“Are you in pain?” Asked Hannibal with genuine concern that surprised even him.

Will waved it off.

“I’ve been shot, I’ve been stabbed, I recovered. I’m going to be sore for the rest of my life. I’m used to it.”

He took another large swig of his coffee, and Hannibal shook his head.

“You don’t follow your physical therapy routine,” he chided, “or else you wouldn’t be in that much pain.”

Will rolled his eyes.

“Thanks, Doctor. I’m sure I’ll take your advice. You were an actual doctor before you became a psychiatrist?”

Hannibal smiled down at his cup.

“A surgeon,” he corrected, “Emergency room. Very observant of you.”

Will nodded.

“Exactly what I need. Someone to point out all my mental problems and correct my physical health problems.”

His tone was somewhat bitter and he stared at his coffee with a look in his eye that might have been an attempt to freeze it solid.

“I have no intention of badgering you about your habits,” Hannibal said, taking a further sip of his own drink, “I think I would like to have friendly conversations with you, if that is to your liking.”

Will frowned at him.

“People don’t tend to like me when they spend too much time around me,” he said and finished off his drink.

“People don’t tend to take the time, I think,” Hannibal replied.

Will gave him a curious look and they both stood to leave.

“You’re an odd fella,” Will said, sounding defeated, but not unhappy.

# Suspect

Zeller was explaining something in his comically ignorant way.

Hannibal had learned to tune out everything but the important information, but Will seemed to be having a harder time with it. He had evidently fallen out of practice over the years. He had a false smile plastered on his face and Hannibal could see him visibly wincing at some comments Zeller made.

“So, basically, the paw prints aren’t from anything we know about,” Zeller surmised.

Jack was unimpressed.

“It took you that long to get to that point?” He demanded.

Zeller looked taken aback.

“I was just explaining why the measurements didn’t fit, and how the shape was wrong,” he said defensively, “I mean, if this is a fake print, then it was really well done. The indentation fits the characteristics of actual walking movements, right down to the way muscles move in a real foot. This was a pro job.”

Will was trying with all his might to appear impressed by Zellers observations, but Hannibal could tell he wanted nothing more than to leave.

“Is there anything else of note?” Hannibal asked, placing a hand on Will’s shoulder in an attempt to calm him. Will did relax by a margin under Hannibal’s touch, making Hannibal all the more pleased to have done it.

Zeller held up a finger as if he had just remembered something. He turned and retrieved something from another table.

“This is a skull of a wolf,” He said, “Now, I know you’re probably thinking it’s way too small to have made the tooth patterns on the bodies. You would be absolutely right. There are no wolves alive today that have that kind of muzzle length. The only reason I bring it up, then, is that the distances are proportionally identical. So, basically, we’re looking for one of these, but bigger than even a full grown man.”

Will sighed, rubbing his face again, looking more tired by the minute.

“Jack, this all fits our theory. I think we should look into Randall. He works at the museum. He’s obsessed with the big predators and stuff. He was even at one of the scenes. I want him brought in.”

Jack didn’t seem happy with Will for attempting to call the shots, but he nodded.

“I understand, Will, but what are you going to ask him that we haven’t? He passed a polygraph, for heaven’s sake. What will you do that we didn’t?” He demanded.

Will hesitated before he glanced at Hannibal.

“I want Doctor Lecter to profile him,” he said, “He and I can figure out if he is really as innocent as he says he is. Polygraphs can be beaten, you know that. Let us talk to him,” Will said. There was an implied ‘please’ at the end of that, but Will seemed determined not to voice it.

Jack shook his head.

“You can’t do an official interview,” he said finally, “We don’t have anything on him, but go to his work or his house and ask to talk to him. If you are still convinced after, we’ll get some surveillance on him.”

Will nodded in thanks and walked out of the room. Hannibal followed.

“I am curious what you expect to find from these conversations,” Hannibal said once they were a good distance down the hall.

Will gave him an apologetic look.

“Sorry for roping you into my plan,” he said, “I just really feel like we’ll get something out of him, and you and I are really the best bet for it.”

Hannibal nodded in understanding.

“Perhaps I should be grateful that you included me in the plan, as you could probably do just as well without me, being as you are,” Hannibal mused.

Will looked at him as if he had just caught fire and spouted poetry at the same time.

“I’m not a witch doctor,” He said, “I really think you will be some great help to the case. You are smarter than most of the detectives I work with on the daily. I need some brains in this work, and you’re what I’ve got.”

Hannibal smiled.

“I’m flattered you think of me so highly,” he said.

Will drove again, and they did indeed end up at the museum he had mentioned.

Hannibal looked up at the building with casual interest. It was one of the older buildings in the city, and it retained some antique elegance about it.

Will led the way to the back, the museum being closed that day, and they found the man they were looking for.

Randall seemed younger now that Hannibal was standing in the same room as him. He was wearing a lab coat and held a skull in his hands. The jaws of the skull had some rather large teeth that would likely have drawn the attention of most detectives.

Will didn't pay it much mind.

"Randall Tier," Will stated, "I'm Detective Graham, and this is Doctor Lecter. He's with the FBI. We have a few questions for you."

Randall looked Hannibal over before nodding.

"Do you mind if I work while we talk?" he asked, hefting the skull for emphasis.

Will waved him ahead, and the man set the skull alongside some other bones on the table. He began picking the bones up one at a time and organizing them.

"What exactly did you see, or experience, the other day when you came across the body?" Will asked flatly.

Randall glanced up, but not at Will. He looked at Hannibal.

"I didn't see anything much," he said with a shrug, his gaze once again on the bones, "It was dark, and my foot ran into something. I looked down and saw the shape of a person, so I tried to see if I could wake them up or help. Only problem is that she was dead already. Got blood on my hands for all my trouble."

He was very casual in his recounting, and didn't seem to be experiencing any feeling of disgust or fear at the memory. This interested Hannibal.

"Do you remember hearing anything beforehand?" Will asked, "Or even smelling something?"

Randall looked at Will now, as if trying to figure out if he was just another stupid cop. He seemed to conclude that Will was smart, but ultimately a regular person who could be easily fooled.

"I think I heard some growling, but it coulda been a car in the distance. I didn't smell anything out of ordinary. I was sorta near a bog, so you know how it is."

Will nodded.

"Interesting specimen," Hannibal noted, the first time he spoke to Randall.

Randall looked up with a proud smile.

"Isn't she just?" he asked, admiring the bones, "She's a cave bear. Extinct now, but they would have given you a run for your money if you ever fought one. They were vegetarian, but they could put up a fight for sure."

Hannibal nodded. Will seemed pleased that he had managed to get Randall to open up a bit.

“You certainly have the right job,” Will noted, “you know just about everything there is to know about these animals, don’t you?”

Randall looked at him suspiciously.

“Of course I do,” he said, “It’s my job to know.”

Will nodded.

“We’re trying to match some teeth markings we found at a scene,” he said, wandering around to look at the other skeletons, “Are you aware of any wolves that are significantly larger than the ones you would find in the united states?”

Randall looked at him with a very peculiar expression at that.

“Are you saying the pattern matches a wolf, but it’s just bigger?” he asked, “Or that it doesn’t match anything you know about and you just want to look at wolves first?”

Will stuck a fake smile to his face.

“I can’t tell you anymore about it, but do you have any ideas?” He said, his voice as friendly as he could muster.

Randall shook his head. He looked back down to his skeleton, carefully taking note of every detail of the bones.

“There are some old wolf species, but their teeth aren’t in the same pattern as modern wolves, and none of them lived around here. I could probably help more if I knew what you were looking for,” Randall finished pointedly.

Will tried to give him a sympathetic smile, but it looked more like an annoyed grimace.

“Sorry. Confidential, and all that. Thanks anyway.”

Hannibal stepped up to a specific skeleton and studied it.

“Evolution certainly favored predators,” Hannibal commented.

Will shot him a confused look, but Randall stood straight up and grinned at him. He walked over to join Hannibal in front of the display, looking up at the skeleton with wide, adoring eyes.

“Exactly. All of this is evidence that humans aren’t really the top predator,” He said, his tone dripping with awe, “We could have become this, but instead we are so frail.”

He was gesturing to the skeleton Hannibal had been admiring. It was an ancient wolf, and one of very large stature at that. The jaws were propped open to showcase the formidable teeth and the entire thing was posed just correctly to display how flexible the spine was and how long the gait would have been. Hannibal had no doubt that Randall had been the one to put it up.

Will was watching Randall with fascination. He was clearly taking note of the blatant admiration he was showing the extinct predator, and his knowledge of their anatomy.

“Evolution gave us superior brains, but gave the power to the carnivores,” Randall concluded with one last loving glance to the skeleton.

He then returned to his table and carefully continued to organize the bones there. His touch was sure, but reverent and delicate. Hannibal could appreciate a steady hand like that.

Will seemed satisfied, though still curious.

“Thank you, Mr. Tier,” he said, “That’s all for today. Stick around in case we need to consult you again, yeah?”

Randall nodded without looking up and waved them away.

They left, and Will had a contemplative scowl etched into his brow as they got into the car.

“So, does mister Tier pass the test, or is he still your suspect?” Hannibal asked.

He expected he knew the answer, but he wanted to hear what Will would say.

“Of course he’s still my suspect,” Will said, almost angrily, “He clearly idolizes wild predators, and he has the anatomical knowledge to have made the tools required for what we’ve seen. I just don’t have any evidence. I need evidence.”

Hannibal nodded.

“Then we should ask Jack to put him under surveillance,” he surmised, “so perhaps we may catch him in something.”

Will sighed and leaned his head back against the headrest of his seat. He closed his eyes. His permanent frown softened as he relaxed and his hair brushed over his brow lightly. The muscles in his jaw worked, and Hannibal wondered if he had the habit of grinding his teeth, or if he had in the past.

“I suppose so,” he said, his voice quiet and tired.

# Alarm

Chapter Summary

Someone bites off more than they can chew

Will held his second cup of coffee in his hands as he stared out the windshield. He had retained his unamused scowl for the entirety of the night, and Hannibal was getting to the point where he felt like laughing at his companion.

Sure, it hadn't exactly been their plan for Jack to make them part of the security detail on Randall Tier, but it was amusing to watch Will chew him out mentally. Every slight change in his expression spoke of exchanged words in his imagination that would be scathing to Jack, and responses that Will heroically withstood in his mind.

The front door of the house opened and Randall walked out. Will placed his hand on the key of the car in anticipation, setting his coffee in the cupholder next to the waiting third cup.

Randall entered his car and the lights turned on as he started the engine.

Will turned the key an inch, the car humming to life, but not yet started.

As Randall pulled away from the building, Will finished starting the car and pulled onto the street a good distance behind him. They trailed him for a few miles until he pulled into the lot behind the museum where he worked. Will pulled into the lot, but stayed near the street so he could block Randall's exit if it came to it. He switched off the car and watched the form of their target like a hawk.

Hannibal watched curiously as Randall got out of his car holding a large box. He had not put it in the car while they had watched him, which meant he must have been keeping it in the car. Will would likely assume it contained whatever he used in the attacks.

Will left the key in the ignition and his hand shifted toward the holster on his hip. His other hand reached for the door handle as they watched Randall walk into the museum through an employee entrance.

The door shut behind Randall and Will let out a huff of breath. He leaned back in his seat, but didn't relax. Each muscle in his body was tensed, prepared to fight or pursue at any moment.

"I can't believe Jack stuck us with stake out duty," Will grumbled, taking a gulp of his coffee, "I'm sorry he threw you into the mix. It's my fault."

Hannibal shook his head.

“I prefer having the chance to see how you operate. I typically only work behind the scenes, so this is a unique opportunity for me,” He replied, pulling a sketchbook from his briefcase.

Will snorted.

“Sure. An opportunity that’s going to mess up your sleep schedule for a month,” he said, “and if anything happens, you’re going to be in the line of danger. You really shouldn’t be here. Jack is being foolish.”

Hannibal hummed slightly as he began a new drawing. He imagined a painting of a werewolf-like creature he had seen once, and thought it almost oddly appropriate for the occasion. He began the framework in light strokes.

“You believe something will happen,” Hannibal observed, “What kind of altercation do you believe we may have?”

Will shrugged, taking large swallows of his coffee to keep himself awake.

“This guy has already killed seven people. He’s dangerous, and I don’t even know what kind of tools he has. I don’t know what to expect.”

Hannibal nodded.

“Some light conversation to pass the time?” He offered.

Will gave him a wary glance but let out a resigned sigh. He probably thought Hannibal was this social with everyone. It wouldn’t be untrue, but Hannibal was genuinely interested in learning more about Will.

“Alright, but usual rules. Quid pro quo,” he said.

Hannibal smiled.

“I expected as much,” he agreed, “I notice you are not particularly fond of eye contact. Is that connected to your empathy?”

Will huffed a laugh.

“Probably, but mostly eyes are distracting. I try to avoid them whenever possible,” he said, “My turn. Why did you leave Europe?”

Hannibal smiled, adding a few strokes to his sketch.

“Medical school, primarily,” he replied, “though I had some family business to attend to farther north.”

Will nodded, taking his coffee at a slower pace now that he had something else to stimulate his brain.

“What led you to become a small town detective?” Hannibal asked, “Since you seem to have worked for the FBI in the past. I would think that would be preferable.”

Will frowned even deeper and set his jaw.

“Jack led me into some dark places, and I kept bringing things back with me,” he said, “A friend of mine gave me the best advice I’ve ever received. Leave the FBI.”

Hannibal tipped his head.

“Curious. I imagine your mind rarely lets you escape the dark unscathed. That must have been trying for your mental health.”

Will didn’t respond to that.

“My turn. What made you stop being a surgeon?” He asked.

Hannibal pressed his lips together with a smile.

“I lost one too many patients,” he replied, “The cost was too high for me. I turned to psychiatry, and none of my patients have died as a result of my therapy.”

Will hummed in consideration.

“You worked in the emergency room,” he stated, “surely you could’ve gotten used to seeing people die. People like me do.”

Hannibal nodded, glancing up at the building they faced.

“I could have,” he admitted, “but perhaps I decided instead to turn my skills to a more rewarding field. I can monitor the progress of my patients through every step, and guide them to a better state of health.”

Will had his eyes fixed on the building, but he raised an eyebrow in reply.

“Jack seems to think you need the support of a psychiatrist,” Hannibal noted, “What is your theory about that?”

Will laughed then. His head tipped back and his hair brushed out of his face.

“He was never very happy with the way I dealt with psychiatrists. He always thought he just had to find the right fit. I don’t really like to have people poking around in my head, and I know all the tricks, so therapy doesn’t work on me. He has always been worried about my mental well-being.”

The bitter tone in Will’s voice was soft, likely worn down by time and forgiveness, but it was still there. He sounded mainly amused and understanding. He turned his gaze to Hannibal for a moment with an almost suspicious look.

“You don’t poke around as much as most psychiatrists,” he admitted, “but I hope you aren’t just trying to lull me into a false sense of security. Like you said, I can put myself in your mindset like putting on a glove. Don’t try to dig around, or you’ll get booted out of my cruiser faster than you can blink.”

Hannibal chuckled lightly.

“You have no need to worry,” he said, “I will respect your boundaries. I abhor discourtesy.”

Will chuffed softly.

“You sure look it,” he admitted.

The back door of the museum flew open and Will tensed immediately. Hannibal turned his gaze to watch, and froze at what he saw.

The figure was only just more than a shadow, but it was immense. It stood a fair eight feet tall and hunched as if to run on all fours.

Will started the car in anticipation of a chase and the figure turned to face them.

When the light hit the shape, the eyes glowed red, staring directly at them. A large mouth opened and bared sharp white teeth at them.

Will moved the car forward slightly, not wanting to hit Randall if he tried to run at or past them.

The creature did get down to all fours, looking as natural in that posture as a bear, and bounded toward them with incredible speed. It jumped onto the hood of the car and snarled. Its gaze was fixed on Will, who had his hand on his gun, ready to draw if the creature tried to get at him. He stared into its eyes with determined anger in his gaze.

The creature turned and saw Hannibal. It shut its mouth and growled deep, before giving him a slight nod.

It then pounced over the car and bounded out onto the street behind them.

Will let out a thread of curses as he whipped the car around to give chase. He lifted the car radio to his mouth and gave some quick orders to any other cars in the area. The car was careening down the road after the shadowy form that was faster than any creature Hannibal had seen.

When Will was done barking sharp orders through the radio, he clicked it back into place and pulled out his gun in one swift motion.

Had he more time, Hannibal would have taken the opportunity to admire Will in this state of determined pursuit. As they were, he took note of it in his periphery as they continued the chase.

Will shouted a curse and slammed on the brakes,

There was someone on the road ahead of them. They wouldn't be able to catch the beast before he made it to the civilian. Will popped open his door and rolled out onto the road, extending his gun to aim it at the creature. He settled into a stance on one knee, giving him stability while also being easy to achieve from having just rolled. His head was low, and his shoulders set.

"Stop!" Will shouted, but the creature continued running away.

Will aimed carefully and let a bullet loose.

He missed the beast, but got his attention.

Randall, as Hannibal had no doubt it was him, turned and snarled at Will. He stood on his hind legs now, extending arms with long, wicked claws to either side. He was a good half block away, and Will steadied his gun, correcting his aim.

"Surrender," Will shouted, "I don't want to shoot you. Come with me peacefully."

There were more sirens screaming down the road behind where Will had screeched to a halt. They were still too far away if the beast rushed Will.

In a flash, Randall was back on all fours and bounding down the sidewalk toward Will. Will fired once more before he was knocked from his kneeling position by an immense mass.

Hannibal was outside the car now, on the wrong side to be of any help, and he had no weapon with him. He ran around the car to see what was happening.

Will wrestled with the creature, which seemed to be shrinking by the second. He had dropped his gun in the initial impact, and there was blood everywhere. Hannibal couldn't tell who the blood belonged to.

Will was doing remarkably well, holding his own against the power of the beast. He kept them in motion, never letting himself be pinned, and was getting in some good blows between absorbing the ones being landed on him.

The flashing lights screeched to a halt and officers jumped out of their cars with their weapons drawn. There was some shouting, and then there was a body, lying still on the pavement.

The victor stood, heaving breaths, over the body, and the officers rushed onto the scene.

# Victor

Randall lay, motionless, in the road.

Will caught Hannibal's eye, and his gaze flashed with something primal and vicious. Hannibal felt the breath leave his chest at the look. Will was covered in blood, and his eyes shone with aggressive victory.

There were paramedics, and they whisked Will away to the back of an ambulance. They asked Hannibal if he was injured, but he brushed them away.

"I am a doctor," Hannibal said to the young man in the ambulance. He had a look in his eye that told Hannibal he was inexperienced and frightened. "Let me help, please. He is my friend."

The young man gave him a relieved nod and moved out of the way.

Hannibal looked Will over. The majority of the injuries were to his hands, but he had a split lip and a darkening bruise on his jaw.

The body was loaded onto a gurney and Hannibal quickly told the paramedics he would take care of Will as they bundled it into the ambulance. They gave him some curious looks, but nodded in approval and thanks as they rushed to the hospital.

Hannibal turned to Will, who was standing silently in the dark beside him.

"Will. Would you like me to take you to the hospital, or would you prefer to avoid the attention for now?" Hannibal asked.

He had a plan, if Will answered the way he hoped.

Will blinked up at him, seemingly unaware that he was even making eye contact. He seemed stunned, but still rational and focused.

"I don't want to talk to any nurses right now," he said slowly.

Hannibal nodded.

"Then I suggest you allow me to drive this time. You are not in a condition to drive just now."

Will nodded and waved at the car. They both knew what he meant. He had left the keys in the ignition.

Hannibal guided Will by the arm and helped him into the passenger seat before he made himself comfortable behind the wheel.

Hannibal carefully and slowly maneuvered through the streets until he stopped in the parking lot of his hotel.

He had refused the cheap motel the bureau had offered to provide him in favor of something nicer and more to his taste.

“I have medical supplies in my room, and I would also like to offer to cook something for you,” Hannibal said, “As I don’t believe you likely have very good nutritional habits from what I have observed.”

Will stared out of the window, distant, but aware.

“Can I take a shower?” He asked.

Hannibal considered this for a moment, drumming his fingers on the steering wheel.

“I will call Jack to ask him,” he resolved, “but in the meantime, I would very much like to get you somewhere more comfortable, and hopefully get you fed. Will you allow it?”

Will nodded sharply, and they both got out of the car.

In the light of the hotel lobby, Hannibal could see the blood over Will’s face and torso. It was entirely too becoming for him, and Hannibal wanted to drink the sight in as much as he could.

Hannibal led Will to his room and made sure to put the do not disturb sign on the doorknob to avoid traumatizing any cleaning staff that might walk in to see the blood covered man. Hannibal set Will in a chair in the small kitchen and retrieved his medical kit.

Will looked up at him when he returned, and he seemed curious.

“You keep a medical kit with you,” He noted, “A habit from your days as an emergency surgeon?”

Hannibal nodded and set the case down next to the sink.

“I think I will call Jack now, and ask him about a shower for you,” he said, taking out his phone.

On the first ring, Jack picked up.

“What the hell happened?” Jack demanded, “I heard you and Will were in an altercation with the killer. Then you two just disappeared. Explain. Now.”

Hannibal sighed.

“Jack. Will was really the one in an altercation. I’m only sorry the paramedics are poor at carrying messages. I am fine, and Will is only slightly roughed. I have taken him into my care, as he was not in a condition where he would like to be smothered by the police as well

as the medical staff at the hospital. This brings me to my question. Is Will permitted to take a shower, or will you need some sort of evidence off of him?"

Jack was silent for one, sweet moment.

"He can clean up. I have plenty of witnesses, and you said he has some scrapes? That's all the evidence I need. Take care of him, doc. He's been through a lot."

Jack hung up, and Hannibal was left to wonder how special someone must be for him to show even that much affection toward them.

Hannibal looked Will over once more before Will spoke.

"So, that's a yes?" He asked, looking up at Hannibal again.

Hannibal nodded.

"You are allowed to shower. I must insist on giving you a bit of an examination before, to be sure you do not have a concussion or a broken rib, or anything of the like," Hannibal replied.

Will nodded.

Hannibal started by checking him for a concussion. He was once again struck by the vibrance and clarity of Will's eyes as he looked into them carefully.

"You do not have a concussion," Hannibal concluded, "But I must ask you to remove your shirt so that I may check your ribs."

Will didn't seem to mind, simply nodding and undoing the buttons. He winced with the movement, but Hannibal was unsure if it was from an injury or just being sore.

The answer came soon enough.

Will had a deep gash on his left shoulder, and it was slowly oozing blood. Hannibal gave it a frown before he turned to check Will's ribs. Fortunately, there were no broken ribs, and Will didn't seem to have broken anything else.

With a sharp nod, Hannibal stepped back.

"You may now shower. I will need to give you some stitches for your shoulder after, but nothing should cause you any trouble with standing."

Will nodded in thanks.

"Uh, not to be weird or anything, but what am I supposed to wear after I shower?" He asked, gesturing at his bloodstained clothes, "I don't exactly want to put these back on."

Hannibal nodded and considered.

“I believe I may have something I can lend you,” he said, walking back to the bedroom, “Wait just a moment, please,”

Hannibal found a comfortable pair of pajama bottoms and a T-shirt he had not expected to have any use of. He folded them into his arms and presented them to Will.

“I’m afraid I can give no guarantee of their size being close to yours, but they should suffice.”

Will nodded and accepted the clothes.

Hannibal directed him to the bathroom. The door shut and Hannibal heard the water turn on.

Hannibal prepared to give him stitches, laying out the supplies in meticulous order, and thought about what he might prepare as a meal for them both. He pulled out a few sausages and some vegetables, setting them out beside a cutting board and knife with a carton of eggs.

Will emerged, a towel over his head as he tried to dry is dark curls. He hadn’t put the shirt on yet, in anticipation of getting stitches. He had the shirt slung over his free arm, and the bloodied slacks were hanging from his fingers.

“Sorry to be an inconvenience to you,” Will said, sitting back in the chair ready for him, “I know this isn’t how you expected to be spending your stay in Louisiana. And it’s a mite my fault.”

Hannibal shook his head, inspecting the wound more closely now.

“I do not mind at all, and I would argue that none of our circumstances are your fault. You saved an innocent life tonight.”

Will huffed a laugh.

“Right. I’m still sorry for it,” he said.

Hannibal hummed lightly. He applied some topical anesthetic to the area and made sure everything was ready.

“I only have topical anesthetic,” Hannibal warned, “But I will try to work quickly so you are not in much pain.”

Will nodded.

“I’ve had worse,” he said offhandedly, “I trust you have a steady hand, going by what I’ve seen. Just don’t rush it.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it,” Hannibal replied honestly.

Hannibal began on the sutures, and Will didn’t flinch. He really had been through something more than anyone had been willing to tell Hannibal about.

Hannibal ran his gaze over Will's torso. He was well muscled and tan, probably very active in his lifestyle. He had a scar from a bullet in his other shoulder, and it stood out starkly against the tanned skin around it. There were a few more, less noteworthy scars over his form, but Hannibal knew they would each have a story.

When the wound was cinched closed, Hannibal turned to examine his hands. The knuckles were all but shredded, having landed a fair few blows to the massive creature during the struggle. There were a few deeper scrapes, but Hannibal knew they would be easily taken care of.

Hannibal took a roll of bandages from his case and began cleaning and gently wrapping Will's hands.

Will seemed to be relaxing slowly, and watched Hannibal work with a strange look of curious intimacy.

"I normally just leave my knuckles to heal themselves," Will admitted, "Band aids don't exactly stay, if I do use them."

Hannibal nodded in understanding, but didn't raise his gaze from his task.

"You must be careful with your hands, Will," he said quietly, "Hands are how we explore the world. They are tactile, and sensual. They provide for us. The least we can do is care for them in return."

Will stared at Hannibal as he finished wrapping his hands. Hannibal nodded in satisfaction and bid Will sit at the table.

Will gathered his clothes and pulled the borrowed shirt over his head before he sat. He eyed the ingredients curiously and glanced out the window across the room.

"It's almost morning," he noted.

Hannibal nodded, beginning to dice the vegetables. He prepared a frying pan and cracked some eggs into a bowl as his hands fluttered over the counter.

"You a professional cook in your spare time?" Will asked with a laugh, "I don't know what you're making, but it has more ingredients than most of the things I eat by the looks of it."

Hannibal smiled down at the food he was preparing.

"I am very careful about what I put in my body," He explained, "Which means I end up preparing most of my food myself. There is no reason to eat plainly."

Will laughed, and he sounded tired.

"I suppose so. What are you making?"

Hannibal glanced over his shoulder at Will before answering. Will seemed to be making himself comfortable, leaning back in the chair and watching him under his dark curls.

“A simple protein scramble,” Hannibal offered, “a very good way to start the day.”

He beat the eggs with some cream and seasonings. He cut the sausages into slices and threw them in the frying pan to brown. As they sizzled, he mixed the vegetables into the bowl of eggs.

Will inhaled deeply as Hannibal poured the egg mixture into the pan with the sausages.

“I think I might actually be sorry to see you go,” Will said, his voice betraying just how tired he was, “If you feed me that, I might just not let you.”

Hannibal glanced at him again, and saw that his head was rested on top of his arm, which was on the table. His breathing seemed to be relaxed, and he was clearly on the verge of sleep.

Hannibal dished the finished meal onto two plates and carried them to the table. He set one in front of each chair before he woke Will.

Hannibal gently shook Will by his uninjured shoulder, and the other man jerked awake, blinking up at him in confusion.

“I really think you had better eat before you rest,” Hannibal said, sliding the plate closer to Will, “I haven’t seen you consume anything other than coffee since we met.”

Will smiled weakly and nodded. He picked up the fork and took a bite as Hannibal sat down across from him.

Will stared at the plate after that, and he slowly swallowed.

“Alright, am I still asleep?” He asked.

Hannibal smiled at him in return.

“No, Will. You are very much awake now.”

Will shook his head.

“I have never eaten something this good,” he said, shoving another bite into his mouth. He chewed and swallowed quickly so he could continue. “You are a miracle worker. This can’t be normal.”

Hannibal continued smiling as he ate his own portion.

“I am pleased you are enjoying it,” he replied.

Will was clearly having to stop himself from shoveling the food into his mouth in an undignified manner, taking large forkfuls.

“If I hadn’t had such a rough night, I’d be missing out on this,” Will realized, clearly too tired to utilize his rational thinking before speaking, “I guess I have no choice but to be glad all this happened.”

Hannibal studied Will as he continued to eat. He was completely genuine, seeming to feel no regret for the night's occurrences. He even seemed more relaxed than Hannibal had ever seen him, though that was probably due to his exhaustion.

Will was soon finished, and was having a hard time keeping his eyes open. Hannibal led him to the bedroom and laid him back in the bed. Will was too far into sleep to realize where he was, so he made no objections.

Hannibal set himself on a couch once he was in his own sleepwear and reclined easily in the hopes of getting a few hours of sleep before Jack called him in.

# Waking

The tap was running. Hannibal opened his eyes to the ceiling of the hotel room and turned over to face the small kitchen counter.

Will was standing over the sink, drenched in sweat. His hands were on either side of the sink, bracing him up against the counter. He splashed some water on his face and drank some from his hand. He was shaking.

Hannibal stood and padded over to him in his socked feet.

“Will?”

Will looked up and guilt flashed over his features.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to wake you,” he said, turning the sink off, “I should have gone into the bathroom. I just got confused.”

Hannibal placed a hand on Will’s shoulder and Will met his gaze.

“Are you alright?” he asked.

Will let his shoulders slump and he shook his head.

“Sorry. I should have thought to warn you. I get nightmares. I haven’t had them this bad in years, but I guess it makes sense. I’m really sorry I woke you.”

Hannibal tutted.

“You are not at fault. I should have asked, being a psychiatrist, as well as a doctor. I gave you stitches without asking for medical history.”

Will smiled weakly at that. He seemed grateful that Hannibal was not angry, but he didn’t believe that he was not to blame.

“I think the bed is a bit soaked now too,” he confessed with a wince, “I’m sorry.”

Hannibal shook his head.

“No need to worry. Cleaning service will take care of it when we are no longer in the way. Would you come sit on the couch, if you are not going to return to the bed?” Hannibal asked, dropping his hand to Will’s elbow and nudging him to the sitting area.

Will reluctantly followed Hannibal to the couches. He stripped the wet shirt off and hung it over the back of one of the chairs before going to a couch.

“Would you like an alternative shirt?” Hannibal asked when Will sat down on the couch without one on.

Will shook his head.

“I’ll just get that one soaked too. There’s no sense in it. Sorry if it bothers you,” he replied quietly.

Hannibal nodded.

“Would you like a blanket?” he asked, “You are beginning to shiver, and there are a few in the linen closet.”

Will nodded, the sheen of sweat drying a few curls to his forehead.

Hannibal retrieved a blanket for him and draped it over Will’s shoulders before he sat comfortably on the other couch. The light was pouring in and reflecting off the ceiling to illuminate the room in a soft orange glow.

Will wrapped himself in the blanket despite the temperature being completely agreeable for once. Hannibal knew the cold sweat he had woken up in would leave him slightly chilled.

“I admit, I don’t remember what I said, and what I just thought, while I ate that egg stuff,” Will said hesitantly, “I hope I didn’t say anything weird.”

“Nothing you should feel uncomfortable about. I have had patients confess some truly embarrassing things while on morphine. You were entirely more tame.”

Will frowned.

“I don’t know if that makes me feel any better,” he said.

Hannibal smiled.

“You told me you enjoyed my cooking,” he offered.

Will nodded.

“That’s something I remember. That food was better than anything I can remember eating.”

Hannibal’s phone rang and he was unsurprised to see that it was Jack calling. He sighed and prepared himself before answering.

“Hello, Jack,” Hannibal said.

“Look, I know you probably didn’t get much sleep, but I need the both of you here ASAP. I have people crawling out of the woodwork to hear what happened, and a comatose suspect. I need you,” Jack explained.

He wasn’t asking.

Hannibal hummed in displeasure.

“We will be there as soon as we can, Jack,” he said.

“Good.”

Jack hung up and Hannibal frowned at his dormant phone.

“Jack wants us,” Will guessed.

Looking up, Hannibal could see Will staring out the window at the growing light on the horizon. He wasn’t upset to be called in this early. He wasn’t haunted by what had happened. He was resigned to his fate of misfortune.

He was beautiful.

“Unfortunately, yes,” Hannibal confirmed, “I think you would like to stop by your home to change clothes, though. Not that there is anything wrong with your appearance.”

He added the last bit in a moment of self indulgence, watching to see Will react.

Will laughed easily and shook his head, his dark curls pulling away from his now dry skin and giving him a dark halo.

“You’d be right,” He said, “I don’t want to give anyone any ideas at the station. People talk about me regardless. It’s only dirt on your cheek.”

Hannibal smiled. How considerate of him.

“Then please allow me to ready myself, and I will be right out to accompany you,” he said, standing from the couch.

He made his way to the bedroom and closed the door behind him. The bed was clearly slept in, and the sheets were still slightly damp from Will’s nightmares. Hannibal quickly dressed himself in a dark blue shirt, rolling the sleeves up in anticipation of the heat. He donned a pair of grey slacks and a purple patterned tie. He combed his hair and deemed himself presentable.

When Hannibal walked back out, Will had folded his soiled clothes, leaving the borrowed shirt on the couch, and holding his own police uniform over one of his arms. He stood, clearly feeling awkward in nothing but a pair of borrowed pajama pants.

“Would you like to borrow a shirt, if only for the drive over?” Hannibal asked, noting his discomfort.

Will nodded sheepishly.

“I’m really feeling like a weed in a boat rotor for you. I just hope you can forgive me for making everything inconvenient,” he said miserably.

Hannibal took a shirt from his suitcase and handed it to Will.

“I do not mind in the slightest. I find your company charming,” he said smoothly.

Will gave him a curious look before he actually noticed the shirt.

“Is this one of your nice, dress shirts?” Will asked incredulously.

Hannibal nodded.

“I only had the oversight of packing one leisure shirt, which I gave you to sleep in. I don’t wear that type of clothing normally. This will do well for you for this short time, I should think.”

Will wet his lips and shook his head as if trying to wake himself from a dream.

“You’re real odd,” He said.

Will slipped his arms into the shirt, having put his clothes temporarily on the dining table. He buttoned it up, save for the top two buttons, and rolled the sleeves up as Hannibal had been doing. The white fabric looked marvelous against his tanned skin and dark hair.

Will scooped his clothes back up, careful not to let the still drying blood touch the shirt he wore.

“Alright, let’s get going before I manage to mess up this shirt too,” Will said as a humorless joke.

Hannibal nodded and removed the sign from the door as they walked out. Will slid into the driver’s seat, tossing his clothes and holster into the backseat as he put the keys into the ignition. Hannibal noticed that Will’s gun had been lost in the scuffle the night before, and wondered if that made Will uneasy.

Will didn’t give any sign of his discomfort as they drove. He kept his eyes on the road and his hands firmly on the wheel. His fingers would occasionally tap out a rhythm, out of a sort of nervous habit as he drove.

They stopped in front of an apartment building and Will turned to Hannibal as he reached for the door handle.

“You’re probably going to want to stay here,” he said, “I’ll be back in half a tic.”

Hannibal nodded and Will grabbed his soiled clothes from the back seat before sliding out of the car and walking across the lot. He left the holster on the back seat, and Hannibal took note of it.

He probably anticipated getting his gun back, and had no reason to bring it in with him just then.

Hannibal pulled his sketchbook back out to continue the sketch from the night before. He mused over the image, knowing now where the inaccuracies were.

Will must be very conflicted about what they had seen the night before. It had been Randall, they both knew as a fact, but it had been monstrous. When the body lay on the road, there had

been no equipment or tools alongside or with it. It was not any animal suit, it had been truly him.

Hannibal made a few changes to the sketch, and it soon looked like what he had seen.

Will slumped back into the driver's seat and glanced over at Hannibal's sketch. There was a flash of recognition, and he looked up at Hannibal with surprise.

"You saw it too," he said flatly.

Hannibal tipped his head with a nod.

Will laughed bitterly.

"I thought I was seeing things again. That's a relief. I thought it was on me for all the coffee and sleep deprivation."

Will tossed the borrowed clothes onto Hannibal's lap and started the car with a smile.

"Now our only hitch is what to tell everyone else," he continued, "'Cause you should know they aren't gonna be too keen on believing this."

He waved at the open page without looking, keeping his eyes on the road ahead of them. He was wearing a uniform identical to the one he had worn the night before, and Hannibal noted that the soiled clothes were also on his lap, in a large plastic bag.

"We should tell them the truth," Hannibal said, closing his sketchbook, "But perhaps leave out the less believable details."

Will frowned, but nodded.

"I guess you're right. I haven't ever dealt with this kinda thing before. You probably figured that, though, since I said I'm not suspicious."

Hannibal nodded.

"I have never dealt with a case of this nature either, though I find it entirely intriguing," he replied calmly.

They drove in relative silence the rest of the way to the station, and Will sighed before he opened his door. He snagged the holster from the back seat and held his hand out toward Hannibal.

Hannibal handed him the plastic bag of his clothes and Will stepped out of the car. He quickly slung the holster back on and walked briskly to the building. Hannibal followed close behind him, and watched as Will walked up to a desk at the front.

"Hey, Mels," Will said smoothly to the woman behind the desk, "If you see Dan or Fells, could you tell them I need to talk to them, Dear?"

The woman smiled up at him and nodded. She swept her glossy brown hair over her shoulder with her perfectly manicured fingers.

“Of course, Will,” she replied, “Jack Crawford is in the briefing room, though you probably know that. He’s real anxious to see you.”

Will flashed her a bright smile.

“Thanks a heap, darling.”

He turned and stalked toward the briefing room.

Hannibal was highly amused by what he had just witnessed.

Will was not happy, now scowling ahead with his jaw set. He had been acting for her, and Hannibal wanted to know why. He certainly wasn’t one to be ungenuine to many, and Will had just plastered on a fake personality.

Will turned and caught Hannibal’s intense gaze.

“What?” He asked defensively.

“I hope you don’t expect that I didn’t notice what happened at the desk,” Hannibal replied, “That was certainly not how you would normally act.”

Will grimaced, turning to glare ahead again as he walked.

“Melody is a difficult person to work with,” He explained, “But she’s sweet on me, and that’s the only way I can get anything done effectively. I did try to tell her once that she’s really not my type, but it didn’t get through.”

Hannibal hummed curiously.

“She certainly is interested in you,” He agreed, “though I can’t imagine that is a very sustainable sort of relationship, you acting as if the interest is reciprocated without going forward with your approaches.”

Will chuckled.

“She’s about as quick as molasses running uphill in a blizzard,” he said, “I’ve been doing this for almost two years, and she still hasn’t caught a hint.”

Hannibal was impressed. He wondered briefly what Will’s type may be, if the friendly young lady hadn’t met the requirements.

Jack was predictably unhappy when they walked in the door. He frowned at them both, offering only a curt nod in way of greeting.

Will held up the bag with his clothes in it before tossing it onto the table.

“In case you need these for evidence,” Will said, “Since I cleaned the rest off last night in the shower. I expect one of the guys has my gun?”

Jack nodded.

“It was recovered at the scene, and Price is holding on to it for you. He should be done with it, so you can pick it up,” He said, “But Will, I need you to make a statement.”

Will nodded. He had been expecting that.

“Then get someone in here to record me while I get my gun. I’m not keen on being without it.”

Will glanced at Hannibal as he walked out the door, the look letting Hannibal know he would return quickly, and that he expected Hannibal to stay with Jack for the moment.

Jack sighed, and Hannibal turned to him.

“I’ll need you to make a statement too,” he said, “and it will have to be separate, just to avoid complications.”

Hannibal nodded.

“How is mister Tier doing?” he asked casually.

Jack rubbed the bridge of his nose. He probably hadn’t gotten much sleep the night before either. He quickly sent a message to summon someone to record their statements.

“Randall Tier is still unconscious, but Will only managed to get a shot at his shoulder. He’s pretty beat up, but he could wake up at any time. We have him strapped to a hospital bed for the time being.”

Jack sounded tired, but Hannibal could tell he was anticipating the end of the case. They had their guy, after all.

Will returned, his gun strapped securely in the holster on his hip. His hand was resting just above it again, ever ready for a fight.

Hannibal excused himself and walked down the hall to the lab where Beverly had been residing during their stay. He hoped he could pick out some information on Will from her. Price and Zeller would clearly be a waste of time in the effort, but Beverly was easier to work with.

Beverly looked up as he entered, and her eyes quickly scanned behind him, possibly expecting to see Will at his heels.

“Morning, doctor Lecter,” she said, turning back to the piece of clothing she was studying, “Anything I can help you with?”

Hannibal nodded in greeting.

“Good morning, Miss Katz. I was mainly looking for some company as I wait to give Jack my statement,” he offered.

Beverly nodded with a smile.

“Well, I’m always open to a friendly chat. How’s your partnership been going?”

Ah, of course she would also be curious. Will and her were clearly friendly.

“I find conversations with Will Graham to be charming,” Hannibal replied honestly, “though he refuses to say very much about his past.”

Beverly huffed a surprised laugh.

“Charming? That’s a word I have only heard one other person use to describe Will, and it was sarcastic. As for his past, it wasn’t very pretty, so I don’t blame him.”

Hannibal tilted his head curiously.

“I understand his less than social habits may make him appear rough to some, but who spoke so crudely as to be sarcastic about his charm?” Hannibal asked, trying not to sound too upset.

Beverly shook her head.

“Doctor Chilton,” she answered, “Will was under his care for a very short time, and Chilton was determined to prove he was a psychopath. It may have soured their relationship a bit.”

Hannibal smiled at her jab to Chilton. He was truly incompetent if he thought Will a psychopath. Hannibal would have to ask him about it sometime.

“Is that the only relationship he soured for Will?”

Beverly looked up with a sympathetic frown.

“Zeller believed Chilton. Will doesn’t really talk to him about it, never did, but they can both feel that they aren’t really friends anymore. Price didn’t know what to think, but he’s usually around Zeller, so he gets some of it too,” She said.

Hannibal nodded.

This was all making his image of Will a bit clearer, and easier to understand. He desperately wanted to know why Will had ever been in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally insane, but he knew that would seem terribly intrusive to ask of Beverly. The more he learned about Will, the more he craved. Will was not a simple creature like the rest, and he could see.

“You are still on good terms with Will,” Hannibal noted.

Beverly shrugged.

“I knew he wasn’t crazy. I believed him, and caught the guy who framed him. So yeah, he still talks to me,” she said.

Her head was ducked down over the clothes now, her breath leaving soft clouds on the fiberglass mask she wore. She plucked a fiber from the clothes with a pair of tweezers and smiled at it.

Hannibal had seen her smile like that a few times. He wasn’t often around when she worked, but she always had that specific look when she found something interesting. If she knew it would be important for a case, she would usually say “gotcha”.

She turned her gaze back up to him and studied him for a moment, a small smile on her lips.

“But he talks to you, apparently,” she said, a prodding in her voice, “and you think he’s charming. I wonder how that’s working.”

Hannibal offered a small smile in return, but it did not extend past his lips.

“Likely better than whatever Jack is doing in an attempt to lure him back to his team,” He offered.

# Leisure

Will was driving Hannibal back to his hotel. They drove in silence, broken only by the occasional comment Will gave on traffic or the weather. He seemed to be really attempting to be social, and it amused Hannibal.

Finally, Will said what was on his mind.

“Price told me our stories match down to the last detail,” he said, giving Hannibal a sideways glance, “He said it was almost as if we rehearsed it.”

Hannibal smiled at that.

“Great minds think alike,” he said casually.

Will chuffed.

“But fools rarely differ,” he finished, “I have a feeling it’s going to make Jack do something foolish. I just hope we weren’t foolish in all of this.”

Hannibal nodded, his smile growing slightly. Will was a remarkable soul.

“We did nothing wrong,” he said, “unless you believe Randall Tier is innocent.”

Will laughed.

“No, we have the right guy,” he stated, “I just hate lies. I suppose I prefer lies of omission, though, so I can make some kind of peace with that.”

Hannibal thought that was very apt of him.

Will pulled into the parking lot of the hotel and parked.

“I would like you to come in so that I may check on your stitches,” Hannibal said, unbuckling.

Will was silent for a moment, and Hannibal looked up at him.

“I can go to the doctor’s,” he said carefully.

Hannibal nodded.

“You could,” he agreed, “But you are already here, and I thought it would be more comfortable for you to have me do it. I get the sense that you aren’t fond of doctor’s offices. Of course, if you are not comfortable with it, I will not insist.”

Will sighed. He undid his seat belt and switched the car off.

“Alright. You got me. I’m not social. Don’t tell anybody, or they might take advantage.”

The dry humor in his tone made Hannibal dip his head to hide his growing smile as they both got out of the car. Will hunched his shoulders as if he were afraid someone might see him and kept his gaze focused on the ground as they entered the building.

Once they were in Hannibal’s room, Hannibal directed Will to a chair and prepared his medical kit once more. He would at the very least need to change the bandages, as the wound was very recent, but he wanted to make sure he had not done a poor job, having been done very, very late at night.

Will took off his shirt without any prompting and Hannibal carefully unwrapped the injury.

“Beverly said you talked to her,” Will mentioned, keeping his gaze away from his shoulder.

Hannibal hummed.

“She is my coworker, I see nothing strange about conversing with her,” he replied.

Will shifted uncomfortably.

“She said you talked about me,” he clarified.

Hannibal nodded.

“I was not aware she would immediately tell you what we discussed,” he confessed, “But I see no reason to deny it. I am curious about you.”

Will furrowed his brow, staring into the kitchen.

“We’re friends,” he said, “‘course she told me when you asked about me. I just can’t figure what makes you so interested. You’re not trying to get at my head, like other psychiatrists. I don’t understand you.”

Hannibal finished the inspection and began binding it again. The muscles in Will’s arm twitched and tensed under his fingers.

“Perhaps it has less to do with your head, and more to do with your heart.”

Will turned to stare at Hannibal. Hannibal looked up and met his gaze calmly. Will was all confusion and calculation.

“You sacrifice yourself,” Hannibal said quietly, “on behalf of others. You plunge into dark places to rescue those who have been lost, regardless of what you bring back with you.”

Will pressed his lips together, and there was a flash of something in his gaze. Hannibal would call it predatory hunger.

“And why do you think that is, Doctor Lecter?” Will asked, matching his quiet tone.

Hannibal smiled lightly.

“You save lives,” he replied, “and it motivates you to go forward. If you stopped, it would sour your peace and leave you feeling guilt in your happy life.”

Will turned away from him and wet his lips.

“I admit, you’re right,” Will said, “but it’s strange, having someone understand that. I don’t tell people that anymore, because they don’t understand it.”

“I imagine your empathy makes it impossible to not understand the pain that others go through, leaving you with survivors guilt of what you did not experience,” Hannibal ventured.

He had to tread softly, as he knew Will didn’t like having people intrude on his mind.

Will looked down at his hands. He flexed them, likely gauging the pain.

“You’re getting awfully close to psychoanalyzing me,” He warned halfheartedly, “And for some reason, I don’t mind.”

Hannibal grinned, then.

“Understanding, and being understood in return are precious things that every person searches for, and very few find,” he said, “Perhaps we simply understand each other.”

Will almost suppressed a shiver and he bit his lip.

“Doesn’t seem simple,” he said.

Hannibal stood and walked into the kitchen to put away his supplies.

“Would you stay for lunch?” He asked, “I think you would benefit from another proper meal.”

Will stood and shrugged his shirt back on, buttoning it up carefully.

“I think I probably have some things I need to do. Jack will want to grill me for who knows what. I should get back to work,” He said.

Hannibal frowned.

“You should be getting a day off after your altercation,” he said, “a good meal and a long rest are what I would recommend. I suppose you wouldn’t be able to allow yourself that, though.”

Will smiled and shrugged, wincing slightly at the pain in his shoulder.

“What can I say? I’m just a saint like that.”

Hannibal chuckled lightly and walked toward the door to let Will out.

“Then there is no temptation that could sway you,” he said, “so I shall have to let you go.”

Will blushed slightly and ducked his head to hide it. He walked toward the door and Hannibal held it open for him.

“I have a day off tomorrow,” he said, purposefully avoiding eye contact.

Hannibal smiled now.

“You told me the young woman at the station is not your type,” he mused, “I’m beginning to wonder, Will, what your type may be.”

Will stepped into the hallway and his head bobbed up. He looked at Hannibal, the same look from earlier flashed through his gaze.

“I suppose it’s tall, pretentious, and much too handsome for their own good,” he said, “see you tomorrow.”

With that, Will walked away a bit more quickly than was his natural stride. Hannibal was left smiling to himself in his hotel room.

That had gone well. He must have something special to cook for the next day.

# Corrections

“Did you catch the wrong guy?” Jack demanded, glaring at Will and Hannibal.

Will stiffened at the accusation, and he set his jaw in determination.

“No,” Will answered, “We caught the right guy. This is a copycat. Maybe an admirer. I don’t know yet. It’s not the same guy.”

Jack managed to frown more, and turned to Hannibal.

Hannibal looked over the picture once and then back up at Jack.

“Will is right,” he said, “this is not the same killer. I agree that it is very likely a copycat or admirer. I would suggest having Will look.”

Will relaxed by a margin, staring Jack in the eye.

“Alright. Will, you and Doctor Lecter get down to the scene. It’s still up, but not for long. Once my crew are done, it’s all coming here.”

Jack waved them away, and Will stalked out, grinding his teeth. He stopped by a vending machine on their way out and got a bag of beef jerky.

“That’s another day off, gone to hell because of Crawford,” Will muttered as they made their way to his cruiser.

“Perhaps our lunch plans have been ruined,” Hannibal admitted, “But I imagine you have the night off at least. Unless of course we find something to change that.”

Will glanced over at him nervously, but nodded.

“Yeah, I guess so. You’re open tonight, I assume. Are you asking me over for dinner?”

Hannibal smiled.

“Only if you are amenable,” He replied.

Will scoffed.

“I was right with pretentious,” he mumbled, tearing the package open and shoving a strip of jerky into his mouth, “Yep. I’m real amenable, Doctor Lecter.”

Hannibal smirked.

They pulled up to the crime scene and they stepped out of the car in unison. Hannibal could see Beverly and Zeller among the crowd buzzing around. Beverly frowned when she caught sight of Will, and quickly began shooing everyone away from the body.

Will took a few deep breaths and readied himself before he ducked under the police tape and walked directly to the middle of the scene.

The man had been gutted, similarly to the previous victims, but the cuts were much more precise. The heart had not been replaced in the chest, but the man had a mouth full of flesh regardless. Most of the organs remained, though they had been removed and placed on the ground around the body in rapidly decomposing piles. The ribs had no marks on them apart from the breaks where they had been plied apart.

“Will, I know you don’t want to be here, but I’m gonna do everything I can to help,” Beverly said.

Will nodded gratefully and stood, nearly motionless as the few remaining forensics guys were ushered away. Hannibal stood a few feet behind Will, having not been asked to leave yet. He watched Will curiously, interested to see Will at work.

Will closed his eyes and breathed deeply. His pupils darted back and forth under his eyelids, and his lips parted slightly.

When his eyes opened again, he turned to Hannibal. His expression was conflicted and confused.

“I don’t think Jack is going to like this,” he said, rubbing his face, “Beverly! You guys can get back in here!”

Beverly led the rest of the crew back onto the scene, and their work resumed. Will walked back to the cruiser, leaving Hannibal to follow.

Once they were both in their seats again, Will sat in stunned silence for a moment. Hannibal could feel that he was on the brink of an emotional outburst, so he remained silent as well.

Will snapped. He cursed loudly and pounded on the steering wheel with his fist.

After a moment of that cathartic activity, Will leaned forward and pressed his head to the steering wheel with a tired sigh.

“I don’t need another one of these in my life,” he bit out, “I’m just tired. I don’t want this.”

He looked back up at Hannibal wearily.

“Sorry. I’ve had one too many psychopaths in my life, and I was hoping I’d avoid them by leaving the FBI.”

Hannibal nodded.

“That’s understandable. Tell me what you saw. What makes you think this is the work of a psychopath?”

Will started the engine and turned the car into town. He chewed on another piece of jerky as he spoke.

“Like I said, I’ve had enough in my life. I know the signs. This guy wasn’t an amature, his cuts were precise, and confident. He’s killed before. He’s not an admirer. He used the cover of copycat so we wouldn’t know what he is. I don’t know what Jack is going to say when he hears all this,” Will said.

Hannibal hummed in thought.

“I think my stay may have just been extended,” he commented.

Will laughed.

“I hope that’s not disappointment in your voice,” He said.

Hannibal smiled.

“No. Quite the opposite, in fact. I look forward to working with you further.”

Will laughed, and Hannibal noted the light blush that colored his cheeks.

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“So, some serial killer just decided to kill this guy just like our last serial killer?” Jack asked, sounding very much unconvinced.

Hannibal stepped between Jack and Will.

“Jack, this was clearly a meditated decision. The killer likely looks for opportunities like this to hide his works. It is not yet public knowledge that we have captured who we were searching for, is it?”

Jack frowned.

“No, everything’s locked up pretty tight,” he admitted.

“Then the killer likely thought his kill would be counted among our friend, Mister Tier’s,” Hannibal explained.

Jack sighed heavily.

“Alright. I guess, since you’re here, I should tell you both what we found with Tier’s things,” he said.

Will perked up, leaning forward with interest. He didn’t seem to notice that doing so put him hovering over Hannibal’s shoulder.

“We found almost exactly what Will described,” Jack said, tossing a few pictures onto the desk in front of him, “Mechanical jaws and claws. Several sets, and some included real bones. I’m positive some will match the marks we found at the scenes.”

Will raised an eyebrow, but didn't voice his wonderings. He looked over the pictures, stepping around Hannibal, brushing his shoulder as he did.

"So now you believe we got the right guy?" Will asked.

Jack shrugged.

"I always trusted you, Will. I just wanted to know why we had another body on our hands."

Will huffed a laugh at that, turning his gaze back to the pictures.

"Jack," Hannibal said, "I do believe it is supposed to be Will's day off today. He has already helped you as much as he can. I think you should allow him to go home and rest. He is recovering."

Jack raised an eyebrow at Hannibal, but nodded.

"Alright, Will. I'll let you know if I need you for something else. In the meantime, go home and get some rest. This is shaping up to be a nightmare."

Will nodded. He turned and gave Hannibal a grateful smile before he walked out of the office.

Jack watched his retreating form before turning his quizzical gaze to Hannibal.

"He seems to like you," he noted.

Hannibal tipped his head.

"He is comfortable with me," he agreed, "Though I think I can justify that. I do not intrude into his mind, as most do."

At the barbed comment, Jack huffed unhappily.

"Just keep at it," He grumbled, "I need Will happy so we can get this done."

Hannibal smiled without humor.

"I had no intentions of making Will unhappy," he said and pointedly checked his watch, "But I have an appointment to keep. I don't think you will be needing my help again today, though you know I am within reach if you do."

Jack wasn't happy, but Hannibal walked out with a smile.

Will was doing very well. Even more so than Hannibal could have predicted, and it gave him a growing sense of anticipation to know that Will could find him out at any moment, without Hannibal's express confession.

Dangerous games were the only ones worth playing, and this was shaping up to potential fatality for one party or the other.

# Understanding

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will have an actual talk about actual things

Will sat, watching as Hannibal cooked. He was wearing more casual clothing than his work clothes, sporting a plaid flannel and jeans instead of his uniform. The holster he wore with his uniform was also absent, though he had a leather one on his belt.

Hannibal thought it very apt of him to carry a gun during his off time. There was a supposed psychopath on the loose, after all.

The small table was much taller than his dining table at home, making it so when you sat in the matching chairs, you had to reach for your toes to touch the ground, despite being as tall as he was. He was not very fond of it, but it had been meant to be temporary.

Will's feet swung lazily back and forth as he tried to hide the fact that he was eating out of a fresh bag of jerky. He likely didn't want to seem rude for eating while a meal was being prepared.

Hannibal had sliced the meat earlier, so as to avoid Will's curiosity at his having a heart to cook.

"I didn't realize you weren't just trying to butter me up when you told me I was charming," Will mused.

Hannibal turned to him slightly, not taking his hands away from their task.

"You realize it now," Hannibal prodded.

Will smirked.

"Beverly said you called me charming," he said.

Hannibal hummed. Beverly was certainly not one for keeping conversations private if it concerned Will.

"I did," he replied.

Will nodded.

"She also said she told you about my stint with Chilton," Will said casually.

Hannibal glanced up and nodded in reply.

“I was curious,” he said. It didn’t feel like an excuse, or justification. Simply an explanation.

“I can’t help but be curious too,” Will said evenly, “about what makes you so curious. I’m certainly not your usual type.”

“To understand and be understood in return,” Hannibal reminded, “I wish to understand you, as you have the unique ability to understand me.”

Hannibal began placing food onto their plates to bring to the table. He smiled down at it with happy anticipation of seeing Will eat it.

“You said understanding is something precious, that few find in life,” Will noted, “I wonder if that isn’t something akin to falling in love, then. Finding mutual understanding.”

Hannibal repressed a shiver at his cool tone.

“I’ve heard it said that betrayal and forgiveness are just that,” Hannibal replied.

Will hummed in thought as Hannibal set his plate in front of him and poured the wine for them both.

“Wouldn’t true betrayal and true forgiveness be born of true understanding?” Will countered, “I can’t imagine one could truly forgive without truly understanding.”

Hannibal grinned. Will raised his eyebrows at him with a smile and put a bite of the meat into his mouth.

“I wonder what kind of meat this is,” Will thought aloud, flicking his gaze between Hannibal and his plate.

Hannibal swallowed, keeping his grin.

“It’s heart,” He said, taking his own bite, “Very difficult to cook properly, but incredibly rewarding when done so.”

Will nodded in appreciation and took another bite. His eyes flashed hungrily as he did, and Hannibal almost thought he saw a glint of red in his irises.

“Your speech pattern,” Hannibal noted, “it changes to accommodate your company. Only recently has it done so for me.”

Will shrugged.

“I try not to,” he admitted, “Most find it mocking. It’s unintentional. I think I only recently actually started listening to what you’re saying.”

Hannibal nodded.

“Another sign of your remarkable ability to make connections with others,” he said, “I am not offended, if you were worried about that. Intrigued.“

Will grimaced.

“I can make connections in my head as much as I want,” he retorted, “but connections with people are hard when I can understand them before they speak.”

Hannibal marveled at Will.

Will avoided Hannibal’s gaze, taking a sip of his wine instead. He seemed to be slowly losing his confidence.

“You seemed put off by something when Jack showed us the pictures of Randall Tier’s possessions,” Hannibal said, trying to give him a break, “I can’t but wonder what.”

Will nodded.

“I just thought it awfully coincidental that the guy who wanted to make himself a wolf, became a werewolf of whatever sort,” he explained.

Hannibal hummed.

“Truly. Something in the universe recognized the darkness inside of him and made his fantasy come to life. A curious thing,” he agreed.

They had both finished their dishes, and Hannibal ushered Will toward the couches with his glass of wine. They sat on separate couches, affording them the opportunity to look at each other more easily as they spoke.

The sky was turning dark outside and shadows cast dynamic patterns over Will’s features, making him all the more breathtaking in the low light.

“So,” Will began, taking a sip of his wine, “Chilton. I can tell you have been wanting to ask.”

Hannibal smiled and nodded slightly in surrender.

“He wanted to get into my head for years. He talked me up in psychiatric circles, telling everyone I had a unique neuroses, and that I would be fascinating to study. Well, he got his chance when I was framed for murder. Some clever copycat planted evidence in my home, and on scenes so everything pointed at me. I was sent into his hospital, and he treated me like a particularly interesting fungus. He called me a psychopath, said I was a monster, and convinced just about everyone that he was right, too,” Will said.

He paused to take a large drink of his wine, nearly draining the glass.

“Luckily, I was innocent, and justice got around to me eventually.”

Hannibal nodded.

“I understand how that must have given you a mistrust of psychiatrists,” he said unhappily.

Will shrugged.

“Most of them end up being like him,” He said, “and I don’t like them poking around in my head.”

He gave Hannibal a once-over and finished his wine. He set the glass on the end table and clasped his hands in his lap.

“But you,” he said, “you don’t poke. You aren’t like them. There’s a darkness in you, too, and it relates to mine.”

Hannibal was silent. He hadn’t expected Will to say that, of all things.

Will smirked, running his fingers over the rim of the wine glass.

“You fed me a man’s heart tonight,” he said lightly, “you should be more careful. I can’t imagine it will go completely unnoticed that the Chesapeake Ripper moved from Baltimore to Louisiana at the same time you did.”

Hannibal stood slowly, realizing he was holding his breath.

Will waved at him to sit again, moving casually, as if there wasn’t a lion in the room with him.

“I haven’t told anyone, and I don’t plan to,” he said, “I understand you, and I think you understand me.”

Hannibal surged forward and captured Will’s mouth in a kiss. Will smiled into it and clutched at the front of Hannibal’s suit.

When Hannibal pulled away, there was that look in Will’s eyes again. Predatory hunger, and a flash of crimson.

“Not often someone makes you speechless,” Will teased.

Hannibal growled in reply, pressing his hands down on the couch to either side of Will. Will’s smile broadened.

“You do understand me,” Will whispered, leaning up closer to Hannibal, “and I have understood you since I saw your first kill. I knew you.”

Hannibal wanted to devour Will where he sat, but Will pushed him back with surprising strength and stood to face him. Will pulled him into another kiss and Hannibal turned them to push Will up against the wall.

Will huffed a laugh when his back was flush with the wall, and he pulled away from the kiss.

“Not one for taking things slow?” Will asked.

Hannibal kissed his neck, just under his jaw, and Will shivered slightly.

“I’ve been as patient as I’m willing,” Hannibal murmured into his skin, “you called me a psychopath.”

Will huffed.

“You’re not a psychopath,” he gasped, Hannibal still nuzzling his neck, “You’re a monster. Just like me.”

Hannibal let his teeth graze just over Will’s artery, feeling the pulse. Will didn’t move, seemingly aware that he was potentially in very real danger.

“Why do you avoid being social?” Hannibal asked, “you are capable of it.”

Will turned his head and caught Hannibal’s lips in another kiss.

“People are afraid of me,” he said, “especially after Chilton. They think I kill people in my spare time.”

Hannibal hummed, pressing up against Will further, feeling the heat radiating off his body.

“Do you?” Hannibal asked quietly, nuzzling his lovely dark hair.

Will looked up at him, something dangerous glinting in his gaze.

“Yes.”

Hannibal snarled and dragged Will to the bedroom.

# Beast

Chapter Notes

> Happy Valentine's day if you are reading this the day it's posted. I think this is a pretty good chapter to have on this day, so I hope you all enjoy it. <3

Hannibal woke with a start. That was unusual in and of itself.

What was more unusual was what was in bed with him.

It was Will, he could still tell, but he was changing. His shoulders were broadening and stretching. His entire form seemed to change and grow before Hannibal’s eyes.

Will rolled over, eyes shining red. His glowing gaze fixed on Hannibal and he climbed on top of him, his much larger form threatening to overpower him completely.

Hannibal returned the gaze with one of calculated curiosity.

The eyes shifted, and turned back to their blue/green color, dark in the low moonlit room.

The beast that was Will leaned down, growling softly and sniffed at Hannibal’s hair. He nuzzled at his neck and ears, before he climbed off the bed and out the window. Hannibal could hear the bounding strides of the beast as it ran farther away from where he lay.

That was interesting.

Hannibal had not expected Will to become such a beast, though he decided it was of little consequence since he seemed to be in no immediate danger.

He lay there, waiting.

Curious to see what would happen.

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Will returned, moments before the sun rose again, climbing back through the window he had left through. He was already shrinking back down to his natural size as he crawled back into bed next to Hannibal.

Will pressed his bloody maw into Hannibal’s chest and sighed, his muscles relaxing as he became wholly himself again.

Hannibal brushed a few locks of hair away from Will's face and drank in the sight of him covered in blood.

There was something clutched in Will's hands, held close to his chest.

Hannibal could have guessed what it would be, but at the slightest touch, Will relinquished his grip and the human heart was imparted into Hannibal's care.

Hannibal kissed Will's forehead and climbed out of bed to put it away properly.

Hannibal climbed back into bed with Will moments before Will woke. He blinked up at Hannibal blearily, confused and afraid.

Hannibal shushed him, running his hand over Will's arm to soothe him.

"What happened?" Will asked in a quiet panic.

Hannibal smiled.

"You brought me a gift, remarkable, lovely Will."

Will looked down at his hands, noticing the blood. He licked his lips and furrowed his brow at the taste. Slowly, understanding dawned over his face and he smiled wolfishly.

"I wondered about that," he said, "There's a version of the Rugaru tale that says one doesn't become a rugaru until they first taste human flesh."

Hannibal raised his eyebrows.

"Oh," he said, eloquently.

Will laughed, pulling Hannibal into a kiss, sharing the taste of blood between them.

"Thanks for dinner. I hope this doesn't put a damper on our relationship. Me being a monster at night."

Hannibal smiled.

"We were both already monsters," He reminded, "the universe has just gifted you with this as well."

Will frowned. He rolled over so he was looking up at the ceiling.

There'll be a body," he noted, "And Jack will say we got the wrong guy. He'll make me look at it."

Hannibal nodded, humming quietly.

"There will be a difference from the others," he said.

Will gave him a quizzical look and Hannibal pulled them both up out of the bed. He led Will into the kitchen and showed him the gift he had brought back with him. Will laughed, almost hysterically.

“I guess I really, really liked dinner,” he said, leaning against the counter, “Or I’m planting evidence to incriminate you.”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, and Will shook his head.

“Don’t look at me like that. I’m not trying to frame you. I remember some of last night, and that was definitely not my intention. It’s a gift.”

Hannibal nodded and closed the refrigerator.

“I thought as much, considering how you left such a mess on yourself,” he said, pulling Will into another bloody kiss.

“I wonder if there is a way to reverse it,” Will thought aloud, “I haven’t heard of Randall turning back, but it might just be because he’s still comatose.”

Hannibal hummed.

“I think you had better take a shower,” he said, “I expect Jack will be calling us.”

Will chuffed and nodded. He pulled away from Hannibal and looked himself over.

“I guess I’ll have to wear my clothes from yesterday,” He said, walking to the bedroom to gather them up from the floor, “I’ll be out in a tic.”

Hannibal smiled after him and began to prepare himself for the day. He had blood smeared on his chest and stomach from Will’s sleepy nuzzling, so he carefully washed himself with a rag. He dressed and began making breakfast for them both.

The call came as Will stepped out of the bathroom, looking even more rumpled than usual.

“Jack,” Hannibal said upon answering.

“I don’t know what the hell is going on in this town, but I need you and Will to get here as quick as you can. He hasn’t answered his phone, but I bet you can get the message to him.”

Hannibal smiled as he looked Will up and down. His dark curls were a bit more pronounced in their damp state, and he had a towel around his neck that he was using to rub over his hair.

“I’m sure I can,” Hannibal replied.

Jack hung up the phone and Hannibal turned back to his preparations.

“Jack has a body for us to look at?” Will asked.

“He didn’t say it in so many words,” Hannibal answered, “but I think it is safe to assume as much. He would like us to find our way to the station at his convenience.”

Will chuckled.

“You have other plans, don’t you?”

Hannibal smiled at Will over his shoulder.

“I see no reason that we shouldn’t enjoy our breakfast before going off to work,” he said, “what Jack doesn’t know will not kill him.”

Will smiled and inhaled through his nose.

“I agree completely,” he said, “And I really think I might just keep you. I could get used to eating this kind of stuff.”

Hannibal smirked to himself and plated the food.

They ate in comfortable silence and Will stopped by his apartment before they went to the station. He came back out in his full uniform, including the cap, much to Hannibal’s joy.

Walking in, there was less of a buzz than they would have expected, a body having been found. Will stopped by the desk again and sweet talked his way into some information.

“Alright,” he said, returning to Hannibal’s side, “they haven’t found the body, but Randall is awake. That’s what all the fuss is about with Jack. I bet he’s gonna want us to talk to him.”

Hannibal nodded as they walked to the briefing room. He opened the door for Will and they both stepped inside to see Jack with a quizzical expression.

“You took longer than expected,” he said.

“I wanted to look over Will’s injuries once more before we came. I apologize,” Hannibal offered.

It wasn’t completely untrue. The night before, Hannibal had needed to keep Will from tearing his stitches multiple times, and he had kept his eye on them to make sure he didn’t hurt himself.

Jack wasn’t happy, but he let it go.

“Randall Tier woke up. I want you two to talk to him.”

Will frowned.

“I don’t know why,” he said accusingly, “I can’t see anything to be gained by us talking to him. He could have killed me. I can’t imagine anything good will come of it.”

Jack shrugged.

“If anything can, then you’ll be the ones to get it,” he explained, “I know you are my best team for this, so I want you to give it a try.”

Will rolled his eyes with a huff, but turned to Hannibal. Hannibal nodded in consent and they were given instructions on where to find Randall.

# Confessions

Randall looked from Will to Hannibal with calculated hatred.

“You shot me,” he said to Will.

Will nodded, completely without remorse.

“You attacked me, and you would have attacked a civilian if I hadn’t gotten your attention. You’ve killed multiple people.”

Randall looked up to the ceiling, seeming to accept that he had been justly dealt with.

“Seven, that you know of,” He recounted, then he eyed Will with a smirk, “Though I think that number may have grown by proxy. Am I right, Detective Graham?”

Will tilted his head with a cold smile.

“Why would you think that?”

Randall glared at Will, then. Hatred emanated from his gaze.

“You stole the gift from me,” he said, straining against the straps that held him, “you have it. I know you do. You made me bleed. You took it. You crave it, don’t you? You crave flesh. When you finally taste it, you’ll be like me. You’ll be worse.”

Will stared at Randall with an almost bored expression.

“You wanted to be a wolf,” Will said, ignoring what Randall had hissed at him, “you even built yourself an animal suit of sorts.”

Randall fell back against the pillows and growled.

“I was a wolf,” he replied, “I was a beast. I killed those people and made them eat their stupid, human hearts. They were so frail. So delicate. Humans are so weak.”

Will nodded, as if he had expected that.

“The press deemed you “The Rugaru”,” Will stated.

Randal smiled wolfishly.

“And do you believe in that, Detective?”

Will smiled and shook his head.

“I’m not suspicious.”

Randall tipped his head curiously. He seemed to be searching Will for some sign that he was lying, but found none. He then turned to Hannibal and his gaze shifted slightly.

“You understand,” he said, “You know how fragile humans are, and that predators should rule over the earth. You know.”

Hannibal nodded, one curt nod.

“I understand that you believe that,” he conceded, “Though I, personally, do not ascribe to that way of thinking.”

Hannibal moved a step closer to Will with his words and something seemed to click in Randall’s brain.

“He does have it,” Randall breathed, staring at Hannibal, “You know it. You understand that he’s a predator, like us. He’s stronger now, like I was. You do understand.”

Will straightened and shook his head.

“Thank you, mister Tier. That will be all.”

With that, Will turned and strode out of the room, Hannibal at his heels.

“That was informative,” Hannibal mused as they walked out of the hospital.

Will grimaced, almost snarling with his distaste.

“So, I made him bleed,” he said, “And that’s what gave this to me. That means I have to have someone else make me bleed to fix it.”

Hannibal nodded as they slid into the car.

“That would merely pass it on, though,” he said.

Will shrugged.

“They would only become the beast if they eat human flesh,” he reminded, “And not everyone is friends with a cannibalistic serial killer.”

Hannibal smiled and nodded.

“Do they have to make me bleed while I’m the beast, or just whenever?” Will wondered, “if so, will I start turning back to normal right then, like Randall did?”

Hannibal shook his head in amusement.

“We have no way of knowing, Will. I do think Jack would like to receive our recorded conversation with mister Tier, though.”

Will sighed and started the cruiser up.

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“What does he mean, you have it?” Jack demanded.

Will shrugged.

“Some tales of the rugaru say that when someone injures the beast, the curse is transferred to them instead,” he explained casually.

Jack raised an eyebrow.

“So, he believes he was really a rugaru, or whatever that thing is?” Jack asked.

“A common case of a delusional mind,” Hannibal offered, “His obsession with predators ultimately grew into the desire to become one, and then the belief that he was.”

Jack sighed heavily.

“At least he doesn’t seem like he’s going to plead not guilty. We don’t have as much to prove, though we definitely could if we did. Good work, Will. Good work to you too, Hannibal. Hopefully we can wrap this copycat case up quick and get us back to Baltimore,” Jack said, “Would you go see what Beverly has found so far?”

Will and Hannibal agreed and walked down to the lab.

“I hope you were as careful as you always were back home,” Will whispered to Hannibal in the hall.

Hannibal smiled and leaned in to Will’s ear.

“One of my best qualities is my ability to be meticulous,” he replied.

Will shivered at the breath that hit his ear and they entered Beverly’s lab.

Beverly smiled up at them when they walked in.

“If it isn’t my two most charming friends,” she teased, “What can I do for you?”

Will raised an eyebrow but walked up to the table where she was working.

“Jack asked us to come see what you’ve managed to get from the copycat scene,” he explained, “find anything?”

Beverly shook her head.

“The real deal gave us plenty,” she said, “saliva, hair, prints and marks. This guy is like a ghost. Left nothing behind but the body. I don’t know what to tell Jack.”

Will nodded.

“He’s seen this kind of thing before,” he reminded, “so he shouldn’t be too surprised. He will be pretty upset though. He wants this to be quick and easy.”

Beverly gave him a sympathetic smile.

“You two still tethered at the hip?” She asked, glancing between Hannibal and Will.

Will swallowed, not looking up at Hannibal.

“Jack has asked us to continue working as a partnership,” Hannibal offered.

Beverly gave Will a knowing look, raising her eyebrows. Will pointedly ignored her, leaning over the table to look at some of her fibers. He pushed his cap up to keep it from slipping down his brow and a few locks of hair fell down into his face.

Hannibal smiled at him, tracing the line of his jaw with his gaze and drinking in the sparkle of his intelligent eyes.

Beverly dropped her jaw a bit, staring at Hannibal with an open mouth.

Hannibal made no attempt to confirm or deny the accusations she was making with her look. It was up to Will, as far as he was concerned.

Will glanced up upon feeling Hannibal’s caressing gaze and frowned at him pointedly. He sighed and straightened up.

“Bev, I don’t want you gossiping about me. You know that,” Will warned.

Beverly grinned wide and nodded.

“Yes, Sir, Detective Graham. I wouldn’t dream of it, Sir,” She said, giving a mock salute.

Will sighed heavily and gave her one last scathing look before they left. Beverly winked at Hannibal behind Will’s back and Hannibal gave her a curt nod in reply.

“What the Hell was that?” Will demanded once they were in the hall and out of earshot of Beverly.

Hannibal tipped his head curiously.

“I don’t know what you mean,” he said.

Will hunched his shoulders, as if trying to hide himself.

“Dirt on your cheek,” Will said, seemingly reminding himself, “I suppose this means you don’t mind.”

Hannibal smiled.

“Of course, if you mind, I will deny everything,” Hannibal answered, “But no, I do not.”

Will shot him a quizzical look and shook his head in bewilderment.

“You’re awfully odd,” he said. Then, he grinned wolfishly again, baring his teeth sharply. “I guess that’s not a surprise, though.”

# Precautions

“My turn,” Will declared as they walked into the coffee shop once more.

Hannibal tilted his head curiously, but made no objection as Will walked up to the counter. Will asked Frank for his usual, then leaned close and said something in a low voice. Frank glanced up at Hannibal with a nod and turned to the back to prepare their drinks.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow and Will laughed.

“I want to see how good I am at guessing,” he said with a shrug, “since Frank didn’t quite hit the nail on the head, I thought I’d give it a go. I’ll get you another if you hate it.”

Hannibal was reluctantly intrigued.

Will picked up both of their cups and walked to the table they had occupied the last time before setting them down and sliding one towards Hannibal.

Hannibal lifted it and inhaled.

Will watched him carefully, studying and calculating his actions.

Hannibal sipped it and nodded in approval. It wasn’t what he usually drank, but it was close, and still delightful. He decided he might change his habit.

“What is your plan for dealing with your new condition?” Hannibal asked.

Will shrugged unhappily.

“I guess I just have to get someone to cut me or something. They’ll end up with a weird craving for meat for the rest of their lives, but as long as it’s someone who isn’t going to eat a person, then they should be fine,” he said.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow and sipped his coffee again. The plan was barely more than vague, but he didn’t want to irritate Will.

“You dealt with the craving by eating beef jerky,” Hannibal remembered.

Will nodded.

“You don’t even want to know how many bags I went through. That stuff’s not cheap either. Luckily for my wallet, I know a guy who eats people,” He said, grinning goofily.

Hannibal smiled at the adorably lopsided grin across from him.

“How fortunate,” He replied.

Will laughed.

“So, what’s our plan for when you have to go back to Baltimore?” He asked, “I was serious when I said I wanted to keep you.”

Hannibal smirked.

“I thought perhaps I would take a vacation,” he mused, “Europe is always nice.”

Will blinked in surprise.

“I can’t tell if you are being serious, or if you are just trying to confuse my inferior brain,” he said.

Hannibal shook his head.

“Your brain is anything but inferior to  mine. I consider us equals, though you clearly have a physical advantage during the night.”

Will blushed and glanced into the shop as if someone might have heard.

“Okay, but are you seriously asking me to go to Europe with you? That’s huge, not to mention weird.”

Hannibal leaned back in his chair.

“I see no reason not to. I would love to show you Florence. You can escape your life of underappreciated detective abilities, unless of course you don’t wish to. We can both start anew, and do whatever we wish, if you accept.”

Will also leaned back in his seat, seemingly stunned into silence as he sipped at his coffee. He stared at the table between them and looked to be calculating something in his head.

Hannibal studied him contentedly, allowing him time to think as he needed.

“Can we get a dog?” Will asked, not agreeing, but not doing anything to curb the hope that the question would plant in Hannibal’s heart.

Hannibal smiled.

“A dog,” he mused, “If you want a dog, Will, why do you not have one already?”

Will shrugged.

“I don’t live in an apartment that allows pets,” he explained, “And my financial situation hasn’t ever really been in the right place for one.”

Hannibal pursed his lips in thought.

“I shall have to think about it,” he concluded.

Will hummed, taking a gulp of coffee.

“I thought so, you pretentious control freak,” he teased, “you don’t seem like the pet type.”

Hannibal frowned.

“I have nothing against pets,” he said defensively, “only against the side effects.”

Will laughed loudly, throwing his head back. The cap slipped off his head and fell behind his back, letting his hair fall in loose curls that bounced with his laugh.

“I knew it. You’d get fur on all your fancy stuff. That’s what you would have to sacrifice,” Will said through the laughs.

Hannibal nodded in admittance. It was true, he hadn’t ever chosen to have a pet. They were typically messy and demanding, and his life had never had room for that kind of inconvenience. Watching Will, with his dark curls and piercing eyes, Hannibal knew he would be willing to sacrifice what he must.

“How much do you remember of your nighttime activities?” Hannibal asked casually.

Will clicked his tongue absently, staring over Hannibal’s shoulder distantly.

“Most of it, I think,” he answered, “It’s a bit in pieces, though. Like a shattered teacup, and I have to sweep up all the shards and try to put it back together.”

Hannibal nodded.

“Did you recognize the victim?” He asked.

Will nodded slowly.

“I think I knew him. He was some sort of blogger, crime enthusiast. He badgered me for years about what happened while I worked for the FBI. I suppose my subconscious wanted to get rid of him,” Will replied, taking a long sip from his cup.

Hannibal smiled.

“We have similar ethics when it comes to targets, then,” he mused.

Will huffed a laugh.

“Eat the rude, I suppose,” he agreed.

“Do you suppose the body will be found easily, or were you more thorough than mister Tier?” Hannibal continued.

Will furrowed his brow with a deep frown. After a moment, he closed his eyes and his eyelids flickered as he remembered.

“I think I was pretty sloppy,” He admitted, his eyes still closed, “But he was pretty private, being in his profession. He might not be missed for a few days. I don’t remember how I left

the scene."

Hannibal nodded.

"I don't suppose any of the evidence will be traceable back to you," he commented, "though I anticipate having the opportunity to see what kind of scene you left."

Will slumped down into his seat.

"I don't like this," he said, "Killing on terms that aren't my own. The beast isn't going to always follow my rules, and it's careless. I need to get rid of it."

Hannibal marveled over Will. He truly was a wonderful subject for admiration, and Hannibal wanted to let him experience the full extent of how much adoration he had to give.

"Then I may be forming a plan to help."

# Plans

“People really are going to start talking,” Will said as Hannibal held the door open for him to enter the hotel room once again, “But since you don’t mind, I’ll let you do whatever.”

Hannibal pulled Will into a kiss and Will huffed a laugh into it. He pulled away with a smile and dropped his bag on the nearest chair. He had brought a set of clothes for the next day this time, having had time to think ahead.

“I guess it’s hard to wrap my mind around the fact that someone like you wouldn’t mind the gossip,” Will admitted as Hannibal closed the door, “and I can’t help but wonder why.”

Hannibal had him backed up to the table with an intense burning in his chest as Will smirked up at him, waiting for a response. Hannibal placed his hands on the table beside Will and leaned in to nuzzle along his jaw.

“They lack the ability to understand,” Hannibal said quietly, “understanding is intimate and unique, which I have longed for more than anything else. I do not require the approval or acceptance of the more simple minds. Not when you understand.”

Will huffed a soft laugh that pulsed under Hannibal’s lips on his neck.

“Understanding. Being seen. The things that make each of us vulnerable to others. Are you not afraid of it?” Will asked.

Will’s hands had clutched at Hannibal’s suit the moment he had pressed their bodies together, and Hannibal moved his chin up so his nose brushed behind Will’s ear.

“Deliciously,” he said, “are you?”

Will hummed, turning his head to catch Hannibal’s lips in a kiss.

“Always,” he replied, “but I suppose trust is one of those things born of understanding. Isn’t it?”

Hannibal smiled, staring into Will’s eyes that were so close now. The blue and green that flickered with the underlying flecks of crimson from his transformation.

“Of necessity,” Hannibal answered.

Will’s phone rang, and he kept eye contact with Hannibal intensely as he answered it.

The moment the phone was opened, Jack’s voice poured out from the speaker, and Will’s lips quirked up in a smirk.

“Sorry, Jack. I’m occupied tonight. See you in the morning,” Will said and hung up before Jack could protest.

Hannibal huffed a laugh along Will's jawline as he nuzzled and nipped at it.

"I expect agent Crawford will be none too pleased with that," he said.

Will chuckled and returned the playful bites with one of his own to the top of Hannibal's ear.

"I don't care," he replied, "I'm not going to be staring at some crime scene for him tonight. I have better plans."

Hannibal pulled back and smiled.

"Then I should begin dinner," he said.

Will rolled his eyes with a smile.

"If you must," he said, uncurling his fingers from Hannibal's suit, but not removing his hands.

Hannibal stepped away and did begin dinner. He thought it was quite appropriate to eat the heart Will had brought, despite it not having been collected in the most precise way. It was intimately symbolic, and Hannibal appreciated it.

"I don't suppose you know what scene Jack wished for you to attend," Hannibal said casually as he began.

Will huffed.

"Nope. I expect it's mine, but it could be something else. I doubt there's anything out there more interesting than the two of us right now."

Hannibal smiled.

"I should hope not," he said, "I would be very much put out if there were."

Will laughed.

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"Remember the plan," Hannibal said for what he knew would feel like the thousandth time to Will.

Will rolled his eyes and pulled Hannibal down into another kiss. Hannibal kept himself propped up on his arms to either side of Will on the mattress.

"I wonder what I would have to do to keep those words out of your mouth," he mused when they separated, giving Hannibal one of his lopsided grins.

Hannibal ducked his head down and kissed Will, trying not to let his own grin get in the way.

"Convince me I have no need to worry," He answered, nuzzling Will with abandon.

Will laughed, his beautiful, wonderful laugh.

“I think it’s included in your profession to worry. How poor a psychiatrist you would be if my words could change that.”

Hannibal huffed a laugh into Will’s neck just under his jaw.

“I think I might just love you, Detective Graham,” he confessed.

Will chuckled lightly.

“People like Jack would say you don’t know how to love,” he said, smirking.

Hannibal pulled away to look at Will.

“And you would say differently,” he said, staring into Will’s lovely, shifting blue eyes.

Will gave him a lopsided grin, his eyes flashing red again.

“I think they are confused,” he said, his grip on Hannibal tightening, “they don't understand how to love you.”

Hannibal grinned. Will tugged him down and let his teeth graze over the side of Hannibal's neck. It gave Hannibal an oddly pleasant thrill to have someone else in a position where they could hurt him, and letting them freely decide if they would.

Trust is born of understanding, he supposed.

“There is nothing you can’t understand,” Hannibal pointed out, almost breathlessly.

Will smiled against his neck.

“You’re asking if I love you back,” he teased.

Hannibal inhaled deeply, trying to commit Will’s scent to memory. So much might happen that night, and he couldn’t be sure of the outcome.

“We haven’t known each other for very long,” Will considered aloud, purposefully avoiding answering. His breath was hot against Hannibal’s skin.

“You knew me since you saw my first kill,” Hannibal reminded him, knowing full well what Will was doing.

Will grinned, grazing his teeth over Hannibal’s artery, letting them scrape and sting just a bit.

“I’ve known you since I saw myself in the mirror for the first time,” Will said, his voice soft, “I’ve known you since the darkness in me made peace with the justice in me. You and I are unique, and alone without each other. Of course I love you back.”

As if scripted, Will then began his transformation. His muscles tensed as he changed, and Hannibal wondered if the change was painful for Will. Hannibal slid to the side so avoid

being on top of the beast when everything was complete.

Will rolled onto all fours as his form stopped growing. He turned to Hannibal, and his eyes were still their beautiful shifting blue. He crawled up and nuzzled at Hannibal's neck and chest.

"Remember the plan," Hannibal said once more.

Will nipped at his shoulder, drawing a few droplets of blood where his sharp teeth landed. Will chuffed lightly before he once again climbed off the bed and out the window.

Now all that was left was to wait.

# Slaughter

Chapter Summary

The plans are revealed

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Is it painful?" Hannibal asked.

Will looked up from his breakfast and tipped his head. The new cut in his shoulder, just next to the previous one, was clean, stitched, and bandaged carefully.

"Changing?" He asked.

Hannibal nodded.

Will put another bite into his mouth and chewed slowly. He seemed to be considering his answer.

"It certainly isn't altogether pleasant," Will replied, "But it's a bit like overextending a muscle. Every muscle."

Hannibal could imagine that would be very unpleasant, but he didn't argue with Will about it.

Jack called Will again, then. Will answered, staring at Hannibal's hands as he continued to eat.

"Yeah, I'll be on my way right quick," Will said after a pause, "I hope you aren't trying to recruit me again. I don't do all that stuff anymore, Jack."

There was another pause as Jack responded. Will's mouth twitched down into a frown and he ended the call.

"Jack is convinced I just need to get a taste for the crime scenes again," Will grumbled, "He thinks I'll come running back to him once he's gone."

Hannibal smiled lightly.

"Jack has a habit of setting himself up for disappointment," he replied, "Did he bother to mention why he was calling you in?"

At that, Will offered a shrug, but his eyes were sparkling.

“Apparently, the body they wanted me to look at yesterday wasn’t the only intended victim,” he said, “Someone attacked Freddie Lounds last night.”

Hannibal smirked.

“Was Miss Lounds injured?” He asked, as if inquiring of the weather.

Will couldn’t suppress his smile any longer, and broke into a grin.

“Only slightly roughed up, if I remember correctly. Apparently she was in town trying to get an inside scoop on what in the world I’ve been doing helping the FBI again.”

Hannibal nodded.

“Her curiosity may have served her well in the past, but it seems the tide is turning away from her favor.”

Will laughed.

“She had it coming, but maybe I shouldn’t say that around Jack.”

Hannibal agreed.

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Melody batted her eyelashes up at Will and he smiled in return. Hannibal could see the pained expression he was so adept at hiding.

“Heard anything ‘bout Lounds?” Will asked, “I heard she got sort of roughed up last night.”

Melody nodded, her eyes wide as she anticipated spilling all the details she had discovered.

“She came into town two days ago, and was looking for you all the time. She was writing something about you, I figure, but she never tried to get past me. She wouldn’t have if she tried, I can tell you that.”

“That’s mighty kind of you,” Will said sweetly, leaning over the desk casually.

Melody blushed, but didn’t waver from her story.

“She says some fella, real big and hairy, broke into her motel room last night and tossed her around. She said he was a werewolf, if you can believe it. Something musta shook her up real bad, ‘cause she doesn’t seem like the superstitious type.”

Will nodded in thanks.

“I wish I could stay and talk,” he said, nodding his head toward Hannibal, “but I got cases to work on and things to do.”

Melody nodded in understanding.

“The world is safer with you at the helm,” she said bashfully.

Will smiled at her as he walked back to where Hannibal was standing, and they both walked to the briefing room together.

“I don’t think I shall ever tire of watching you act so,” Hannibal commented with an uncharacteristic grin.

Will grimaced.

“Well, don’t get used to it. After this case, we’re out of the country, unless you changed your mind. I don’t plan on sticking around anyhow, so shut up.”

Hannibal let his shoulder brush Will’s as they walked, and he hummed.

“I haven’t changed my mind, and it seems you are amenable to everything I proposed,” he said.

Will rolled his eyes and stopped outside the door of the room.

“You pretentious bastard.”

He opened the door and Jack turned sharply to face them.

“Took you long enough, and Doctor Lecter, I should have guessed. Ever heard of Jeff Hollins?”

The question was aimed at Will, and he grimaced visibly.

“Unfortunately. What’s he said this time?” He asked.

Jack shook his head.

“Nothing, and that’s a permanent development. He was killed in his apartment. It looks the same as our werewolf killers.”

Jack handed him a file and Will flipped it open as he turned toward Hannibal. Hannibal saw his pupils blow wide as he looked at the pictures, and he could see why. Will had made a tableau of the kill, much more than Randall Tier ever had.

The man had his organs strewn out, his hands reaching for them and his face frozen in horror. His heart would be missing, of course, but his mouth had been stuffed with bits of his other organs. There were yellow markers pointing out where Will had left clues that would never lead back to himself.

“This wasn’t the same guy. We caught Randall, and he was the first one. The second one isn’t going to kill like that again. This is someone new. It might be a one off for him too. He’s going to be hard to catch, but it’s not something you have to stick around for.”

Jack furrowed his brow.

“If this was a one off, who attacked Lounds?” he asked.

Will shrugged.

“Just about anyone. She doesn’t exactly have a lot of friends in the public circles. She has made plenty of enemies, just about everywhere.”

Jack pinched the bridge of his nose and closed his eyes.

“You’re right. I guess I’m just a bit worn out. This isn’t exactly a stress free environment,” he said.

Hannibal put a hand on Will’s shoulder. Will took a deep breath, and Hannibal spoke to Jack.

“I agree. I think a break for everyone would be well earned once everything is wrapped up and finalized with this case.”

Jack nodded.

“Yeah, probably. Let’s just get this over with.”

Chapter End Notes

It's a bit short this time, but the next chapters are longer. I just needed to split it here. I hope you enjoy.

# Gossip

Chapter Summary

There's a lot of gossip going around

“So, how did the perpetrator get into your motel room?” Will asked, not even sparing Freddie a glance.

Freddie's eyes darted between Hannibal and Will, her fingers frequently reaching up to brush the dark bruise on her jaw. She certainly didn't seem any worse for wear mentally, though she was a bit wary.

“Through the window,” she said, her voice just a touch less sure than usual, “it must have. I kept the locks on the door secure, and it's all still together.”

Will nodded, taking notes as protocol demanded.

“And what did they look like?” He asked, “anything you can remember.”

Freddie set her jaw, clearly understanding how she was about to sound.

“Eight feet tall, covered in hair, wolfish face. It was a werewolf, detective. I'm telling you it was.”

Will rolled his eyes.

“I didn't think you'd been in town long enough to fall for all that talk, but I guess you live off gossip. Have any useful information?”

Freddie frowned, staring at the wall over Will's head with defiance and anger.

“Yes. I managed to hurt it. I had a gun, and I hit it in the shoulder. It was bleeding. I see your shoulder isn't faring too well this morning, detective Graham.”

She glanced at the bandages that were partially visible under the sleeve of his uniform. Will rolled his shoulders in response, wincing slightly at the pain.

“That's from a while ago. Serial killer. That all you got?”

Freddie huffed, folding her arms.

“For now. Why were you working with the FBI, detective?” She asked quickly, then glanced at Hannibal. “Or I suppose you still are. I thought you put all that behind you.”

Will offered a wry smile, jotting something else down.

“Serial killers are the bureaus territory, this one just happened to be in my jurisdiction,” Will answered, turning and opening the door to usher her out, “we will be in touch to ensure your safety. Thank you for your time, Miss Lounds.”

Freddie stalked out of the station unhappily. She had clearly been hoping to find out something interesting about Will.

Will handed his notes to Melody as they headed to the labs, offering a “thanks, sugar,” when she agreed to give them to Jack.

“You might agree to speak with her about Randall Tier,” Hannibal suggested as they walked, “she would appreciate it, I'm sure, and you could get her off your back.”

Will smirked, nodding.

“Your speech pattern just sounded a mite closer to mine,” he remarked, “I wonder how long it'll take us to talk like each other habitually.”

Hannibal smiled.

“I plan to find out,” he said, stopping just outside the doors to the lab.

Will blushed, grinning goofily.

“You like to make a mess of me just before I have to face the team, don't you?” He asked.

Hannibal’s smile widened.

“I would like to do more,” he said, his voice low.

Will didn't have time to respond before Hannibal opened the door to the lab. He walked in with purpose, smiling to himself as he imagined the lovely shade Will must be turning behind him.

Price looked up from his table and smiled before his eyes landed on Will.

“What happened to you?” He asked, seeming genuinely concerned.

Will cleared his throat and Hannibal turned back to look at him. He was delightfully red, and shifted his weight nervously.

“I just got done interviewing Freddie Lounds,” Will offered in explanation.

Price nodded in solemn understanding, mistaking his embarrassment for anger and frustration.

“I bet you're glad that's over with. Find out anything good?”

Will shook his head.

“She's convinced it was a werewolf,” he said with exasperation, “as if I haven't been dealing with enough of that lately.”

Price offered a sympathetic smile.

“Maybe she's keeping the truth a secret, trying to write some groundbreaking expose?” He asked.

Will shrugged.

“Her funeral,” he replied, “maybe literally.”

Price smiled, though Hannibal could see the lingering unease he felt around Will. He must feel guilty for something. Maybe he had agreed with Zeller, whether secretly or aloud, while Will had been incarcerated.

“Well, this guy never stood a chance against whatever got at him. He was doomed to die seconds after he was attacked, poor fellow.”

Will tipped his head and furrowed his brow.

“Did he not die immediately, then?” He asked.

Price shook his head with a frown at the body.

“He was alive for almost all of it,” he said, “all the way up to his heart being ripped out. Even if someone had found him before that, though, there wouldn't have been much to do. Too much damage was done too quickly. He was doomed to die, but suffer all the way up to it.”

Will swallowed, hiding both a grimace and a grin. Hannibal wondered which would have been more genuine.

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“This looks so much more like the first set of killings,” Beverly said, confusion coloring her tone, “speaking forensically. The display was different, obviously, but all the fibers and hairs are almost identical.”

“This must be some dedicated admirer,” Will agreed, his sharp eyes scanning over the tables of evidence.

Will pushed his hair up out of his face, making his cap slide back so it perched precariously on his skull. He wasn't paying any attention to it, but Hannibal stepped up and took the cap from his head.

Will froze curiously, and Hannibal pressed a smiling kiss to his hair before brushing his hair back gently and setting the cap more firmly onto his head.

Beverly looked like she might just explode from emotion. Her mouth hung open, but the corners of her lips were pulled up in a smile. Will gave her a dangerous glance.

“Not a word,” he said.

Beverly grinned, mimicking the motion of zipping her lips shut.

“Was anything found that might lead to the identity of the killer?” Hannibal asked, letting his hand rest at the small of Will's back.

Beverly couldn't remove the grin from her face, but she turned back to the evidence.

“I doubt it. It took you guys to track down the last guy before he killed a hundred people. We just barely got some of the lab results back. Turns out, all the hairs from Randall's kills were wolf fur. Makes sense, in hindsight, but I'm guessing we’ll find the same thing with this one. Any ideas how to catch him?”

Will shrugged, rubbing his eyes tiredly.

“He's not going to have the same profile as Tier. He might not even continue to kill. I don't know where to start.”

Beverly nodded, frowning sympathetically.

“Well, if he does, then we’ll be sticking around. Do you think it's the same guy that attacked Lounds?” She asked.

Will shook his head.

“If she's telling the truth, and her attacker really looked like a werewolf, then no. This guy,” he waved at the evidence, “wouldn't wear a costume. It would get in the way. All his additions to himself are merely continuations of what he thinks he already is. He would look like a man in a monster skeleton.”

Hannibal touched his nose to Will's temple with a shameless smile, breathing in deeply. Will smelled more alive than he had since his transformation, and he smelled more like Will. Hannibal wanted to sear it into his memory palace, to remember in times of Will's absence.

“Perhaps Brian has something of use,” he said, poking at Will.

Will sighed in exasperation.

“Maybe, but you're gonna have to stop that, or I'll make you wait in the hall.”

Hannibal grinned at the idea of Will treating him like a misbehaving pet.

“I promise to behave,” he said.

Beverly was so pleased she looked like she might burst, and Will was less impressed with Hannibal's display.

“God. You guys are so soft,” she said with intense joy, “this is so cute.”

Hannibal remembered moments of their time together that could never be described as soft, or anything so stereotypically, happily bland, but he offered a smile to Beverly all the same.

“I think it is time for us to speak with Agent Zeller,” he said, knowing all too well how the idea chafed against Will’s skin.

Will hadn’t forgiven Brian, after everything. Brian had likely asked for forgiveness, and apologized as fully as he could, but he would forever be guilty of his misjudgment, and Will would never consider him a friend again. Will reacted to the words and presence of the other man like a common allergen. Unavoidable, but unpleasant.

Beverly nodded, still grinning, and shooed them away to continue their search for information they already possessed.

Once in the hall, Will shoved Hannibal against a wall. His hands were on Hannibal’s shoulders, and his arms kept the distance between them steady.

“What the hell are you doing?” He asked, not sounding nearly as angry as Hannibal knew he wanted to. His eyes danced with amusement at everything Hannibal had done, and the scowl he wore softened by degrees before he would school his expression again.

“I would apologize, but I think there would be little use,” Hannibal replied, “I saw no danger in showing affection in front of one who had already guessed. See how much it pleased her.”

“I know you’re playing a game, and I want to know how long you’ve been playing,” Will said, “You have the number of every agent you work with. How long have you been manipulating them to do what you want and see what you want?”

Hannibal bared his teeth in a grin.

“How long have you been showing the world the meek and easily manipulated Will Graham, hoping they would overlook the monster?” He asked in return.

Will didn’t stop his face from breaking out into a grin, now. He ducked his head with a huff of laughter, his fingers curling into the fabric of Hannibal’s suit vest.

“You’re distracting her. She won’t work as well now. You don’t trust that there is nothing to be found?”

Hannibal tipped his head.

“I trust that my actions will keep any suspicious thoughts away from you, in case her mind were to wander,” he replied calmly.

Will shook his head, but released Hannibal and started walking to the next room, which was just a meeting room that had been converted to a lab for Zeller to use.

“Just don't get me into hot water with Jack, he's already wary of me from past experience.”

# Monsters

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“So, basically, this doesn't look as much like a wolf as it does a large dog,” Zeller said, referring to the teeth marks they had managed to dig up, “the tooth pattern is close to a wolf, but just off enough that it's closer to a dog. Evolution, and all that. Whatever breed of dog, it's way bigger than it normally would grow to be. Freddie was probably right with the eight feet if this thing were to stand up on its hind legs.”

Will nodded, though the other man's voice seemed enough to bother him. He seemed to itch in his presence, and Hannibal wanted to soothe it away, but he refrained from making any move to help.

“So, definitely not the same guy as the first ones?” Will confirmed, glancing up at Zeller with inquisitive eyes.

Hannibal very much enjoyed seeing Will put on such a facade, showcasing the potential empathy had when paired with such a brilliant mind.

Zeller shrugged.

“I mean, that guy had plenty of stuff. If some of it was missing, we would never know. This could be someone using one of his contraptions, but I'm pretty sure you caught the right guy.”

Will smiled wryly, likely remembering when Zeller had been sure the right guy had been him, and he had been wrong.

“Well, if you find anything else, or something changes, let me know. You know how to find me.”

Will was apparently not interested in trying to needle more information from him or stick around for a chat. They were already leaving the small lab, and Hannibal offered Zeller a curt nod as they walked out.

In the hall, Hannibal placed his hand on the back of Will's neck. Something that could have been seen as controlling or threatening, but Will would understand and see as a comfort. Will did indeed relax a bit under his touch, and Hannibal smiled.

“Your time with Fredrick must have been terribly stressful to you for it to still be affecting you so much,” Hannibal noted, not unkindly.

Will huffed.

“That's a light way to phrase it,” he answered, “I'm lucky I didn't come out crazy when they thought I had gone in crazy. There were times I wasn't sure about either of those.”

The confession struck Hannibal, and though he had never had any real reason to harm Doctor Chilton before then, he found himself decidedly choosing an appropriate recipe. Chilton was amusing to toy with, but this was unacceptable.

Perhaps as a gift to Will.

“Your thoughts are getting louder,” Will said, “you don't have to punish him for me. I amuse myself with the memories of how he floundered under my gaze.”

Hannibal hummed happily and made sure they were quite alone before he pulled Will into a kiss.

“I have no great attachment to the man,” he said under his breath, “but now I feel he has bordered on traitorous. Perhaps I will punish him for myself.”

Will grinned and shook his head in wonder.

“The Chesapeake Ripper, killing a man for me,” he mused happily, “I'll have to think about that.”

Hannibal mirrored his grin, pulling him into another kiss.

“Anything,” he said breathlessly, “for you.”

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Will was growing to know Hannibal far better than anyone had ever managed before. He could all but hear his thoughts, always knowing where Hannibal's mind would stride. There was no greater thrill or joy for Hannibal than to feel so easily and completely understood.

Will had grown to love the monster before he had met the man, and he now knew the man and the monster as they were. Embodied together in one form. Hannibal.

Jack had worked them both over, grilling them about this “new killer”, but Hannibal was growing bored with it. He knew there would not be another kill of the same nature, unless Miss Lounds had been lying all these years about being a vegetarian and somehow came across his specific brand of meat.

As long as everything went according to plan, they had effectively killed the beast.

Standing on the doorstep of Will's apartment, Hannibal could almost forgive Jack his rudeness. He looked Will over with adoring eyes as he fumbled for his keys. He seemed tired, but beautifully victorious in having pulled off such a delicate operation of fooling the agents.

“I'm warning you,” Will said for the third time, clearly nervous, “I'm no neat freak. My place is nowhere near as nice as anything you're used to, I'm sure.”

Hannibal smiled, remembering times he had spent catching minutes of sleep in the back of delivery trucks as he made his way to Paris.

“You might be surprised,” he offered, keeping his tone serious rather than teasing.

Will glanced up and understanding flashed through his eyes as he finally opened the door.

“Sorry, yeah. You're right. Come on in.”

Hannibal followed him through the door with a light smile still on his lips.

Will had been right in that it was certainly not as neat as Hannibal preferred to keep his own spaces, but everything was very much how he thought Will would be.

The stack of worn paperbacks by the one lounge chair seemed to whisper Will's name. The fishing gear carefully stored in the corner said Will. The smell of everything was of Will, and Hannibal breathed it in.

“I don't normally drink anything fancy, but I can offer you some whiskey, unless that would insult your tastes,” Will said, trying valiantly to hide his nerves as he offered.

Hannibal smiled fondly at him.

“I would enjoy it, if it adheres to your tastes,” he replied.

Honestly, it was endearing to imagine Will drinking whiskey here, thinking of new ways to exact justice, through the law or otherwise. He might have case files to pour over as he sat in the lounge chair, or he would memorize the contents and tip his head back to sort through it all in his head.

Will was the kind of man who would come in on a hot day and strip down to his boxers, pour himself some whiskey and sit back to do some reading, or contemplating.

Will handed him a glass, and Hannibal took it with a pleased smile. Whiskey tasted differently than it had before, to Hannibal. He took a sip and it tasted like Will.

Will tapped his fingers nervously against his own glass, and Hannibal could see into his past. Before his incarceration, he had been a tool used by the FBI, and had meekly obeyed orders, shying away from conflict despite the side of him that lived for it.

Hannibal stepped forward and pulled Will into a gentle kiss, which was met with surprise, but willingness.

“Alright,” Will said when they pulled apart, “I'm not sure what that was for, but I don't mind.”

Hannibal smiled.

“Until now, I have not been welcomed into your mind as you were welcome in mine. I have only just seen all of you, and you taste of whiskey.”

Will offered a mischievous, lopsided grin in return.

“You saw all the dark side before, so you're letting me know you love the rest of me,” he said.

Hannibal kissed him again.

“You only saw the dark of me, and fell. You met the rest of me and fell again. I have just returned the sentiment in full. I love you, Will Graham.”

Will downed the rest of his whiskey and pulled Hannibal into a rough kiss, stumbling back toward the hall. He pulled away slightly to set his glass on the counter in the kitchen, giving Hannibal a chance to swallow the rest of his own whiskey and do the same.

Will dragged them both down the hall and into a room that contained a single, rumpled bed.

Chapter End Notes

One more chapter to go.

I hope you are all enjoying the ride, and are not too upset to see it end. When one door closes, another opens, and when one fic ends, I have about five in the wings waiting to begin being posted. Basically, if this one didn't end, others would stack up faster than they already are, which would drown me.

Thank you for reading. <3

# Gifts

Chapter Summary

A few months later...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal bid goodbye to his last patient, reminding them of the referral he had given them. They told him to enjoy his vacation, and he assured them he certainly would.

When the door closed, Hannibal allowed himself to take a deep, relaxing breath. Everything had been arranged and settled. The past days had been an increasing irritation on him as he anticipated seeing Will again.

There were still a few things that needed to be done before he left.

Hannibal walked along the shelves, selecting the few editions of books he didn't want to part with. He placed his sketches into a folder and slid them into his bag. He put the books into a box with a few of his other things and carried it all out to his car.

Hannibal grinned when he saw the form leaning against the passenger door, a few boxes and a duffel bag at his feet. Will lifted his head and grinned.

“Nice office. I have to say, your tastes really don't seem to be the same as mine.”

Hannibal slid the box into the back seat and moved to crowd Will against the car, kissing him like a starved man.

“My tastes are evolving with every thought of you,” he admitted, “I have acquired a new appreciation for whiskey recently.”

Will laughed.

“Glad it's not just me, then,” he said, “I've stopped eating fast food.”

The rush of affection that came over Hannibal then caught him off guard, and he pressed Will completely flush against the car as he nuzzled and kissed him. Will smelled healthy and clean. He had showered very recently, and the thought made Hannibal's smile grow.

Will had been nervous about seeing him again.

“You needn't have worried. I am still every bit enamored with you,” Hannibal mumbled into Will's hair.

Will pushed him back a bit and shook his head in amusement.

“I think we have a flight to catch, Doctor Lecter, unless you are changing your mind.”

“It becomes more tempting with every breath you take,” Hannibal replied.

Will laughed.

“Romantic,” he scoffed, “I'm not changing *my* mind, so we had better get on our way. I left my precinct a gift that I'd rather not be around to be thanked for.”

Hannibal gave a dramatic sigh.

“I don't anticipate my own parting gift to be found until tomorrow, but I understand your urgency. Will you tell me about it on the drive?”

Will kissed him and agreed.

They put the boxes into the car and both slid in, starting on their journey. One life was left behind them, to serve as fond memories going into their new life.

Chapter End Notes

They move to Europe, get a dog, and name it Rugaru(Rue for short).

I hope you all liked the story.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!